RISING VOICES:

ORGANISING CORK'S WORKERS, 1820-1926

TADGH QUILL-MANLEY /
TADGH Ó CUILL-MAONLAÍ

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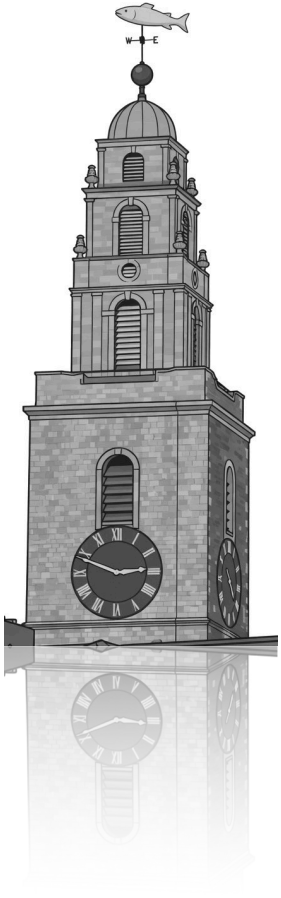

TADGH QUILL-MANLEY
Tadgh Ó Cuill-Maonlaí

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**This text was a hobby project by a college student.*

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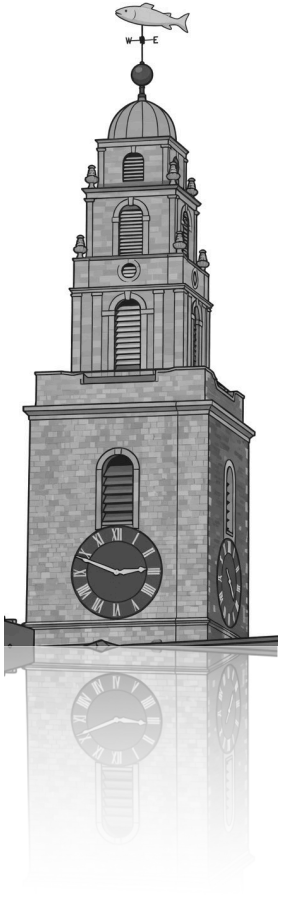

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION - 'ÉIRÍ NA NGUTHANNA'
3

'BREAD & ROSES' - JAMES OPPENHEIM'S POEM
12

THE GROWTH OF WORKERS' ASSOCIATIONS IN CORK, 1820-1881
14

BREAKING THE SILENCE, 1881-1899
35

A NEW MOVEMENT BECOMING, 1900-1905
76

RISING WITH THE SMOKE, 1906-1910
100

HARD LESSONS - HARDER WINS, 1911-1915
124

IN THE SHADOW OF THE YARDS, 1916-1920
181

A NEW STATE OF PLAY, 1921-1926
236

CONCLUSION
347

POEM - 'THE CHANGE WE SOUGHT'
354

POEM - 'D.D SHEEHAN B.L.'
356

RISING VOICES
INTRODUCTION - '*ÉIRÍ NA NGUTHANNA*'

In the latter decades of the 19th century, Co. Cork stood at a crossroads of industrial ambition and political upheaval. The city's working population, long tethered to the rhythms of dockyards, workshops, and foundries, combined with the rural population's association with the grassy fields and woollen mills, began to coalesce into a more structured and self-aware political force. This transformation was neither spontaneous nor inevitable; it was the result of deliberate organisation, strategic alliances, and a growing recognition among workers of their collective strength. Central to this change was the emergence of local trades councils, which served as both the crucible and catalyst for a new era in working-class politics.

The roots of Co. Cork's labour movement can be traced to the early 19th century, a period marked by sporadic and often localised efforts to improve working conditions. These early unions were typically craft-based, reflecting the skilled trades that dominated the city's economy back then. Violent acts, arson and public disorder were sometimes carried out by affiliated groups. However, as industrialisation progressed, so too did the complexity and scale of labour organisation. By the 1870s, the need for a more unified approach became apparent, leading to the formation of the Cork Trades Council. This body aimed to coordinate the activities of various trade unions, providing a platform for collective bargaining and mutual support.

The establishment of the Cork Trades Council had represented a significant shift in labour organisation. It moved beyond the parochial concerns of individual trades, fostering a sense of solidarity among workers from diverse backgrounds. This unity was not merely symbolic; it translated into tangible gains, such as improved wages and working conditions, achieved through coordinated strikes and negotiations.

The physical spaces where trade unionists and workers congregated played a crucial role in cementing a sense of shared identity. In Co. Cork, the proliferation of union halls, co-operative shops, reading rooms, and the growth of workers' clubs also signified a clear deepening of class consciousness and organisational maturity. These were not merely logistical outposts for meetings or industrial strategy sessions, as they were also cultural centres, educational hubs, and social sanctuaries.

The Cork United Trades Hall became a locus of activity that extended well beyond strikes and negotiations. It hosted lectures, musical evenings, and debates on everything from international socialism to temperance. Such venues were instrumental in fostering a literate, politically engaged working class, cultivating an environment in which civic responsibility and class solidarity could flourish in tandem.

An under-acknowledged aspect of trades council activity in the period was the emphasis placed on education and self-improvement. Many trade unionists, particularly in Co. Cork, were autodidacts who had risen through the ranks not only by virtue of their craft, but also through sustained engagement with literature, economics, and history. Evening schools and study circles proliferated under the auspices of labour organisations. These were often informal affairs, hosted in back rooms or borrowed church halls, but they played a vital role in shaping articulate and thoughtful leadership within the movement. Figures such as Michael Egan and James Gould were as much products of this intellectual culture as they were of their respective forms of employment. This educational drive also underscored a crucial point: the labour movement was not merely reactive. It aspired to build a society in which workers could participate fully, not only in the economy, but in the moral and intellectual life of the nation as well.

The interplay between labour and nationalism in Cork city and county was both intricate and influential. Throughout the 19th century, ‘nationalist’ movements like the Repeal Association and the Home Rule League garnered significant support among the working class. For many workers, the

struggle for national self-determination was inextricably linked to their economic aspirations. Political independence was seen as a pathway to social and economic reform. However, this alignment was not without explicit tension. Some conflict developed, with more than one trades council existing in the city and county simultaneously.

As the century progressed, disillusionment with nationalist leaders who failed to address workers' immediate troubles had grown. This dissatisfaction prompted a gradual shift towards independent labour representation. The Cork Trades Council played a pivotal role in this transition, advocating for policies that directly addressed workers' needs, such as fair wages, reasonable working hours, and safe working conditions.

Though often absent from formal leadership structures, women were a fundamental part of Cork's labour landscape. From textile factories to domestic service, women formed a significant proportion of the city's workforce. Yet their voices were seldom prioritised within trades council discourse. Nonetheless, there were moments when female labour emerged visibly and forcefully. Organisation lead by female workers in Cork city and county, supported by segments of the broader labour movement, highlighted both the centrality of women's labour, and the gendered limitations of union solidarity. While some male trade unionists advocated for the inclusion of women's grievances, others viewed female employment through a rather protectionist, or even paternalistic lens. The tension between inclusion and marginalisation would continue into the 1920s and 1930s, but these early episodes laid the groundwork for more sustained campaigns for women's industrial rights and union membership in later decades.

The formation of the Irish Trades Union Congress (ITUC) in 1894 marked a turning point for labour organisation in Ireland. Prior to its establishment, Irish trade unions often operated in isolation, or under the auspices of British unions, which sometimes led to conflicting priorities. The ITUC provided a national forum for Irish workers, enabling more cohesive strategies, and amplifying their political voice. Cork's

engagement with the ITUC was particularly robust. Local leaders, such as Michael Egan, who served as president of the Cork United Trades, and later as chairman of the Cork Workers' Council, were instrumental in shaping the national labour agenda. Their involvement ensured that Cork's specific concerns were represented at the national level, while also bringing broader issues back to the local context. His successors in the 20th century, such as George Nason and Richard Anthony, would also have a major impact.

As the 20th century dawned, labour disputes became more frequent and more politicised. The Cork Workers' Council increasingly found itself navigating the shifting ground between industrial action and civic negotiation. Notably, the Council began to engage directly with the city Corporation (Cork's local government body), lobbying for public works employment schemes, housing reforms, and fair wages for municipal workers.

This period also marked a shift in emphasis from oppositional protest to that of constructive engagement with governance. Some trades council members stood for local office, with varying degrees of success. The goal was not only to win concessions from employers but to reshape the very machinery of local administration to better reflect the needs of working people.

The written word proved vital in shaping the public identity of the labour movement. Cork's labour activists were keenly aware of the power of print, and throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a range of publications—some affiliated with specific unions, others with the broader trades council—sprang into existence. Trade union papers had allowed local organisers to disseminate news of strikes, debate political issues, and respond to prevailing employer-federation propaganda. These platforms also provided opportunities for poetic expression, satirical cartoons, and letters from rank-and-file members. In this way, print became not just a tool of communication, but an instrument of cultural production, by giving voice to a class that was often silenced in more traditional forums.

While the Cork Workers' Council operated in a distinct Irish context, its members were not insular. The Council maintained correspondence with counterparts in Great Britain, especially in South Wales and England. In a society deeply shaped by Catholic doctrine, the labour movement had to tread carefully. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Cork was, at times, wary of the movement's more radical inclinations. Grassroots trade unionism was not always viewed as compatible with the values of deference and humility prized by the ecclesiastical authorities of the period. Yet, despite this, the majority of Co. Cork's trade unionists were practising Roman Catholics, who sought to reconcile their faith with these class-based demands.

There were occasional flash-points, such as the clerical condemnations of some strikes, or aggressively socialist rhetoric, but there was also dialogue and, occasionally, collaboration. The Christian ethos of fairness, dignity, and stewardship could be marshalled in favour of labour rights just as easily as it could be invoked against them. In fact, it is apparent that Catholic priests supported the organising efforts of grassroots trades unionists.

The early 20th century was a period of profound political upheaval in Ireland, culminating in the struggle for independence. During this time, the Cork Trades Council and other labour organisations found themselves increasingly involved in nationalist activities. This involvement was not merely ideological; it was also practical. For instance, during the tumultuous 1918 anti-conscription strike, Co. Cork's trade unions played a leading role in organising mass protests, effectively bringing the city to a standstill. Such actions had demonstrated the capacity of organised labour to influence national policy, and assert its relevance in broader political movements.

However, the alignment with nationalist causes also presented notable challenges. The focus on political independence sometimes diverted attention from pressing labour issues. Moreover, the close association with such nationalist movements occasionally led to internal divisions within the

labour movement, as differing priorities and strategies emerged.

The decade following the Easter Rising saw Ireland engulfed in conflict, both national and civil. Cork, as a city of strategic and symbolic importance, bore the brunt of much of this unrest. Throughout these turbulent years, the Cork Workers'/Trades Council struggled to maintain relevance and coherence. On one hand, labour activists contributed significantly to anti-conscription campaigns and strikes. On the other, the violence and polarisation of the period made it increasingly difficult to pursue industrial demands in the traditional sense. Nevertheless, the Council's survival through these years is testament to its adaptability and the depth of its institutional roots. Even as national attention shifted towards questions of sovereignty and civil order, the Council kept alive the ideal that political freedom should be matched by social and economic justice.

However, the quickly growing Irish Transport & General Workers Union, which had been far more radical than the regional workers' councils, would play a key role in the Republican struggle. In Cork City, the joint Republican-IT&GWU slate in the City won control of Cork Corporation in 1920 (with constitutional Nationalist and the Cork Trades Council candidates winning far fewer seats). The-then radical IT&GWU played an essential role in advancing and influencing the Irish Republican agenda, and described its aim as establishing a "Workers' Republic."

Following the establishment of the Irish Free State, the labour movement faced new challenges. The initial euphoria of a level of independence gave way to economic difficulties and political instability. In this context, the Cork Workers' Council and other labour organisations had to navigate a complex landscape, balancing the need to advocate for workers' rights with the realities of a nascent state grappling with limited resources and competing priorities.

Despite these challenges, the labour movement in Co. Cork continued to develop. It increasingly focused on issues such as housing, healthcare, and education, recognising that

economic justice extended beyond the workplace. The Council also sought to engage more actively in electoral politics, supporting candidates who prioritised labour concerns and working to influence policy from within the political system.

By the end of the 1920s, the Cork Workers' Council had developed into a more formalised and politically astute organisation. Its leaders were no longer merely negotiators, but, instead they were now also municipal campaigners, housing reformers, and educational advocates. The Trades' Union Council increasingly saw itself not solely as a defender of immediate economic interests, but also as a steward of working-class life more broadly. The onset of the Great Depression and the changing fortunes of global capitalism would test the foundations laid in previous decades. However, the Trades Council's early efforts had ensured that Co. Cork's working class entered the 1930s not as a fragmented group of tradesmen and labourers, but as a politically conscious and culturally cohesive force.

The formative years of what would ultimately become the Cork Workers' Council and the broader labour movement in the city were characterised by a dynamic interplay of organisation, advocacy, and adaptation. From its early days coordinating trade unions, to its involvement in national political movements, the Council demonstrated a consistent commitment to improving the lives of workers. Its ability to navigate the shifting political landscape, while maintaining a focus on core labour issues, ensured its enduring relevance. As we reflect on this period, it becomes clear that the development of local trades councils in Co. Cork not only shaped the trajectory of working-class politics in the city, but also contributed significantly to the broader narrative of labour in Ireland. This text, titled '*Rising Voices: Organising Cork's Workers, 1820-1926*' (also titled '*Éirí na nGuthanna*') shows that their legacy is one of resilience, innovation, and an unwavering dedication to social justice.

It is anticipated that this project might initiate a renewed discussion on the history of urban local government in Ireland, and perhaps even encourage further contributions.

This book can act as an initial foray into the subject, preventing vital information and events from being lost forever. It is important to underline this, how it is intended as a preliminary step—a foundational investigation that aims to safeguard essential information and emphasise key events that might otherwise fade into obscurity. While every effort has been made to guarantee detail and accuracy, in a project of this nature, where sources are often fragmentary, unclear, and limited, issues such as misinterpretations, errors, and inaccuracies cannot be ruled out and are generally accepted as inevitable in such circumstances. Nevertheless, it is preferable to have some record or awareness raised about the topic rather than none at all. We should encourage more non-experts to summon the courage required to engage with such pursuits. Exploring history should be an open field for the curious, and not exclusively the domain of "gatekeepers." Any corrections or supplementary knowledge would be more than welcome, enabling it to fulfil its purpose and effectively achieve the project's aim—to learn about and preserve the past so that future generations can recognise this significant heritage in workers' organisation.

‘*BREAD & ROSES*’ - JAMES OPPENHEIM’S POEM

As we come marching, marching, in the beauty of the day,
A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill-lofts gray
Are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses,
For the people hear us singing, "Bread and Roses, Bread and Roses."

As we come marching, marching, we battle, too, for men--
For they are women's children and we mother them again.
Our lives shall not be sweated from birth until life closes--
Hearts starve as well as bodies: Give us Bread, but give us Roses!

As we come marching, marching, unnumbered women dead
Go crying through our singing their ancient song of Bread;
Small art and love and beauty their drudging spirits knew--
Yes, bread we fight for--but we fight for Roses, too.

As we come marching, marching, we bring the Greater Days--
The rising of the women means the rising of the race--
No more the drudge and idler--ten that toil where one reposes--
But sharing of life's glories: Bread and Roses, Bread and Roses![1]

[1] *The Cry For Justice: An Anthology of the Literature of Social Protest, ed. by Upton Sinclair, John C. Winston Co. (1915).*

THE GROWTH OF WORKERS' ASSOCIATIONS IN CORK, 1820-1881

It was thought that the first trades council in Ireland, which had been formed in Cork city in 1820, represented all of the local crafts present at that time. Like its affiliates elsewhere in Ireland, the Cork Union of Trades had a confrontational view of industrial relations, and sought to organise and engage in a political struggle with them. However, it appears that attempts to unify working-class interests in Cork city and county ran parallel to one another. Although the more socially respectable Cork Trades Association was inaugurated in June 1832, the Cork Union of Trades persisted until the 1840s. The city was also home to nineteen different trade unions in 1845, with a few of them being affiliates of larger British federations.[2]

Additionally, in late 1826, the England-based '*Co-operative Magazine*' released a 'Prospectus of the Cork Co-operative Community,' intended to be established 'within 15 miles' of Cork City. The primary catalyst behind this project was the renowned large landowner and utopian socialist, William Thompson. The 'Prospectus' highlighted that over ninety percent of labour's output was not utilised by the producers themselves, but rather by 'the impoverished, wholesalers and retailers of various kinds, carriers, employers, capital holders, landowners, tax consumers, not to mention legally sanctioned trade monopolists, as well as practitioners of healing, harm, or what they claimed to be deceit under the guise of the Law.' This 'Cork Co-operative Community' would bring together working-class individuals in substantial numbers into a cohesive family, devoid of disparities and conflicts of interest that otherwise afflicted what they regarded as the fundamental sanctuaries of home life. It was claimed that Members would not be distressed by the presence or obligation of the impoverished, as all individuals would be

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[2] O'Connor, E. (1992). A Labour History of Ireland, 1824-1960. Gill & MacMillan.

occupied in endeavours suited to their specific abilities and physical conditions; those rendered incapable due to illness, injury, or advanced age would naturally receive assistance from their peers. Members would be empowered to eliminate the necessity for wholesale and retail dealers, as they would undertake all functions pertinent to such roles; they would also forgo the need for transporters, since they would cultivate the majority of heavy items on their own property. They would forgo employers since they would become their own employers. They would be liberated from the influence of speculators as they would abstain from speculation, 'not desiring to profit from the toil of their fellow beings.' They would, it asserted, have a secured market as they believed that they could provide a market for one another, creating and consuming the results of each other's labour. They would furthermore, it claimed, resolve matters independently of legal counsel, as the disputes stemming from personal ownership would dissipate with the elimination of their underlying causes, with all small conflicts being amicably settled within the community.

It was also suggested that they could circumvent medical bills as "the art of promoting health" would be cultivated. It was claimed that consistent temperance, immaculate cleanliness of both residence and individual, the avoidance of detrimental occupations, and ample provision of all beneficial resources would supposedly guarantee health, which was referred to as the essential foundation of all other joys. The community was to consist of 2,000 members, and although capital had been sourced (including that raised through the sale of shares), the project collapsed.[3]

In 1822, the '*Carlow Morning Post*' reported that on a Monday night that September, the house of a carpenter named Mr. James Barry, located on the near side of Glanmire, about two and a half miles from the city centre, was attacked by a detachment from the Union of Trades in Cork, consisting of approximately forty men. After smashing all the windows at the front of Barry's house, as well as those of the adjoining property, they broke in and brutally assaulted Barry and his

[3] *Pankhurst, R (1991). 'William Thompson: Pioneer Socialist.' Pluto Press*

wife. Their rage had seemingly been provoked by Barry's refusal to join their organisation and by the fact that he had secured employment at a reputable distillery in the city. Barry had a gun, which he attempted to use in self-defence, but, being out of order, it failed to fire and, tragically, was seized by the attackers and used as a weapon against him until it was broken.

Barry initially managed to escape from his house but was pursued and attacked again. His sister rushed to his aid, and although she sustained serious injuries herself, her intervention allowed Barry to escape a second time into a neighbouring house. The mob broke into that house as well, destroying its doors and windows and severely beating its owner, but they failed to find Barry. They eventually departed, allegedly vowing vengeance, and threatening to fully carry out their violent intentions against him.[4]

In November 1825, it was reported that In the dark, early hours of one Friday morning, around 1 o'clock, a group associated with the Union of Trades in Cork used crowbars, sledges, and other tools to demolish a building intended for use as a distillery at the Watercourse, in Cork. The action was reportedly taken because country tradesmen had been employed by the contractor. One of the proprietors, Mr. Ring, accompanied by two others, proceeded to the site armed, and each discharged a pistol. It was believed that some individuals among the group may have been wounded. As Mr. Hing was making his way into town to seek assistance, he apprehended a man named Mr. Cornelius Desmond, alleged to have been part of the group, and brought him to the Shandon guard-house. Desmond remained in custody for approximately two hours, before he managed to overpower the sentinel, escape custody, and flee. Pursued by authorities, he attempted to swim across the river towards Kyrl's Quay. Despite repeated calls to surrender, he remained in the water, and ultimately drowned near the Coal Quay dock. His body was later recovered near Lap's Island. Other incidents were reported in connection with this group, including an assault on Mr. O'Connell, a resident of Blackpool, who was struck

[4] *Carlow Morning Post 19/9/1822*

by a stone while observing events from his window, resulting in the loss of at least four teeth.[5]

However, as per an 1832 edition of the '*Limerick Chronicle*,' Dr. Herbert Baldwin, of the Liberals, was enrolled as a member of the Union of Trades in Cork.[6]

Recorded incidents of violence continued. In June 1833, it was reported that agitators belonging to the Cork Union of Trades had destroyed a house belonging to a Cooper who was supposedly "obnoxious to them." They also burned the greater part of a cooperage used for the storage of firkins.[7] Furthermore, in September 1833, it was reported that for some time, the neighbourhood around Hammond's Marsh in Cork city centre had been experiencing disturbances involving damage to the houses of certain employers of journeymen. Over a period of six weeks, nine houses were reported to have had their windows broken and other forms of damage inflicted. At midnight, on a weekday that month, the house of Mr James Walsh, an industrious tailor living in Broad Lane, was attacked. Sixteen individuals, described as members of the Cork Union of Trades and wearing white paper caps along with white jackets and trousers, were involved.

They allegedly broke eighteen panes of glass at Mr Walsh's residence, before proceeding to the home of a man named Mr. Mahony in Duncan Street, where they carried out a similar act of vandalism. The article suggested that such incidents naturally raised public concern about safety and order. It was suggested that greater vigilance by magistrates and peace officers would be necessary to ensure public security. There was an expectation that some of those

[5] *Belfast Newsletter 4/11/1825*

[6] *Limerick Chronicle 1/9/1832*

[7] *Roscommon and Leitrim Gazette 22/6/1833*

responsible would eventually be apprehended and held accountable for their actions.[8]

At the Cork Chamber of Commerce, in December 1833, an interview took place by appointment between the two city representatives in Westminster, Daniel Callaghan, Esq., and Dr. Baldwin, and a deputation from the journeymen tradesmen of the city. The deputation consisted of one representative from each trade, their object being to induce the former gentlemen to intercede with the proper authorities for the mitigation of the punishment of transportation awarded by the Recorder against the three bakers convicted of combination and of assaulting Mr. Murphy, the master tailor of Bachelor's Quay, for employing what are termed "Cobs." The meeting was held in consequence of a prior arrangement, after the deputation from the trades had solicited it, it being considered that the more open and public the matter of solicitation was made, the more it would conduce to effect the common object— to put an end to what had been viewed as the disgraceful and injurious outrages against persons and properties that had lately occurred in Cork city.

There were also many individuals of the mercantile and manufacturing classes present, who appeared to take considerable interest in the proceedings, and all seemed most anxious to see an end to the recent lawless conduct among some of the journeymen. Mr. Meagher, who had been instrumental in procuring the meeting, introduced the deputation, giving a brief explanation of their object. He concluded by suggesting that if they could induce the city representatives to intercede with the Recorder and, subsequently, with the Government, for a commutation of the sentence under which the three men lay, they would come forward and give perfect assurance that, in future, there would be a cessation of the outrages that had produced alarm and distress.

A tradesman then handed Dr. Baldwin a paper, containing a memorial to the Government in favour of the sentenced

[8] *Chutes Western Herald 12/9/1833*

men, supported by the deputation of the different trades, who were assembled in anxious expectation of the result. They earnestly solicited the aid and interference of the city members. Dr. Baldwin assured the deputation that he was always ready to promote lawful and legitimate objects. However, if they supposed that he—or, he was sure, his honourable colleague, would directly or indirectly use their influence on behalf of persons who had violated the laws, unless there were satisfactory guarantees that the system of threats and outrages in Cork would cease, they were greatly mistaken. Neither his principles as a man nor his duty as a legislator would allow him to act in any way that could imply approval of the ruinous and destructive system that had appeared to prevail among the trades. The men had been convicted of assaulting a tailor in broad daylight for exercising his lawful right to employ whom he chose. It was explained that they did not kill him, but instead endangered his life. It was suggested that to suppose that Dr. Baldwin would intervene without conditions would be to mistake his character entirely. He then alluded to the damage allegedly being done to every branch of trade and manufacture by such patterns of behaviour. If men of capital were thwarted in their operations by the allegedly unreasonable demands of the mechanics, what little manufacturing existed would soon vanish, and capital intended to provide employment would be transferred abroad. Thus, it was claimed, the Trades' Unions would bring about their own ruin.

"What right," he asked, had one man, by a system of tyranny, to prevent another from working where employment offered? They had been elected, he noted, to defend liberty and privileges, but it appeared many constituents were instead exercising tyranny over their fellow tradesmen, to everyone's detriment. A tradesman assured Dr. Baldwin that unjust imputations had been cast on the Cork trades. He himself was a member of the union and solemnly declared that they had never contemplated or engaged in violence. Dr. Baldwin replied that if satisfactory pledges could be obtained, ensuring no more threats or outrages, he and Mr. Callaghan would have no hesitation in applying to both the Recorder and the Government for clemency. Otherwise, they would abstain entirely.

Other speakers followed. Mr. O'Sullivan mentioned the topic of an allegedly threatening notice served on a gentleman to dismiss some carpenters. Mr. Daly raised the matter of stones intended for the new infirmary being thrown into the river, being acts of destruction done under intimidation. Mr. Callaghan remarked that while every man could work for whom he pleased, there should be no coercion, nor should anyone be prevented from working as they chose. Mr. Joseph Hayes warned the tradesmen that their own actions would lead to their ruin if they persisted in a system of terror and coercion. Dr. Baldwin concluded that he would not interfere, unless there was total abandonment of the despotic system now existing among the trades. Public outrage was widespread, and he claimed that it had even reached England and France.

A tradesman protested that prejudice existed against the trades, but insisted they had not supported the conduct complained of, and would continue to oppose it. Mr. Daly reaffirmed that with proper guarantees, the city members would intercede; without them, they would abstain. Mr. Callaghan added another point: the danger of a permanent police force being introduced into the city if insecurity continued. The constabulary was already overwhelmed, and the establishment of a police force would burden the community. After much discussion, it was resolved that the deputation should return to their respective trades, consult upon the terms under which the city members would intercede for the three bakers, and report back within a few days. In the meantime, it was hoped that the trades of Cork would assemble and, in the presence of their leaders, express their support for lawful conduct, and to cease all intimidation.[9]

Yet, on 1 January 1834, it was reported that an assault was committed on a Mr Keane, of the firm Keane and Turnbull, merchant tailors, by a group reportedly comprising between fifty and one hundred individuals associated with various trades. At approximately six o'clock in the evening, while Mr

[9] *Tralee Mercury 18/12/1833*

Keane was travelling by coach to his home in Blackrock, he was stopped just beyond the House of Industry by this group, who had gathered in a lane leading from the Rock Road to the Gas Works. The group threw stones and used sticks to damage the coach, breaking its windows and injuring the driver, who was pulled from his seat, kicked, and sustained injuries including the loss of two teeth. Mr Keane was struck by stones, one blow rendering him temporarily incapacitated. Two men attempted to remove him from the coach, but failed.

Following this, Mr Keane appealed to the group, citing concern for his family. After a brief discussion among the group members, they agreed to desist on the condition that Mr Keane would comply with the demands of his workmen, and not oppose the Union of Trades. Mr Keane agreed under the circumstances. It was not clear at the time what specific terms were demanded, as no written details were provided; he was simply told to "find them out," as other employers reportedly had. It was understood that the broader aim of the group was to encourage employers to align themselves with the Union and its objectives.

Later information indicated that the driver of Mr Keane's coach was now in serious condition as a result of the injuries sustained during the assault. It was also reported that the group remained at the scene until approximately eleven o'clock that night, anticipating the arrival of Mr Turnbull, Mr Keane's business partner, although Mr Turnbull, having been informed of the earlier incident, remained in town, and avoided a similar encounter.[10]

In 1834, an individual was charged with assaulting a person, allegedly invoking the Cork Union of Trades when doing so.[11] Additionally, in 1835, at the Cork Assizes, a judgment of death was recorded against Joseph M'Donnell, a member of the Union of Trades, for maliciously throwing vitriolic acid

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[10] *Kerry Evening Post 1/1/1834*

[11] *Limerick Chronicle 16/4/1834*

on John Hennessy, a cabinet-maker, with the intent to kill him.[12]

In 1843, Mr Besnard, of Cork, being in the city on business connected with emigration, had an interview with some of the working coopers, being anxious to enquire whether they would make up butter firkins for the Cork market. In the course of the conversation that took place, he referred to the combination that had been entered into by the coopers of Cork, to keep out of the market all firkins that were not marked with the Union of Trade brand, and stated that they had succeeded in inducing many of the country tradesmen to adopt their political views. He made some forcible observations on the probable mischief that would result to the trade in this country from such proceedings, and stated as a fact, to elucidate the truth of his observations, that the city of Cork coopers were willing, if the merchants there agreed to their terms — allowing two of their body to stand in the market and examine the firkins from the country as they were brought in — to fall to work the following morning. This, he said, should be full proof to the country coopers that their interests were not equal, and that the city coopers were merely endeavouring to serve their own ends. He stated at the same time that the proposal was indignantly rejected by the merchants in the trade.[13]

As described in '*The Colonial Paradox: Trade Unions in 19th Century Ireland*,' during its existence, the Cork Union of Trades was known for its particularly combative approach, which had been shared by its affiliates, and were organised with a view to conflict in mind.[14]

According to '*A Biographical Dictionary of Cork*,' one of the key founders of the Cork Trades' Association was a teacher by the name of Mr. Thomas Sheehan. A former editor of the

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[12] Belfast Newsletter 7/4/1835

[13] Cork Examiner 27/9/1843

[14] Emmet O'Connor (2023). The Colonial Paradox: Trade Unions in 19th Century Ireland. ResearchGate, [online] pp.151–65.

'*Cork Mercantile Chronicle*,' he became a leading face of radical politics in Cork City.[15]

An 1835 edition of '*Cobbett's Political Register*' shows a debate depicted in an article titled 'The Cork Tanners,' with input from Mr. Thomas Sheehan, in which an 'apologist' outlines that, during a protracted dispute, a fourth attempt was made to soften the stance of the 'capitalists.' This effort originated from the desire of the smaller masters to free themselves from the "yoke" that the larger employers had allegedly imposed upon them. Some among the smaller masters, it was claimed, had begun to suffer serious losses as a result of the bond; they were unable to secure competent workers to manufacture their goods and were consequently forced either to suspend their operations entirely or continue at a significant disadvantage. They were willing to rehire the former workers or to employ some of those who had struck in other yards, but they feared the wrath of the leading masters. A highly respected clergyman, the Reverend Mr Russell, whose heart was said to yearn for the suffering of the unemployed tanners and who was held in high regard by the masters, undertook the leadership of this fourth and final attempt. Under his guidance, a meeting of the workmen was held, during which a memorial to the masters was adopted and signed. Four citizens — Messrs Brennan, Jeremiah Murphy, Joseph Morrogh, and Michael O'Donoghue, were appointed to negotiate on their behalf for terms that would be mutually beneficial to both masters and men. It was understood that the signatories of the memorial pledged not to engage with any illegal associations, having previously been accused of connections with the Cork Union of Trades. They also promised, in future, to openly approach their masters with any grievances. The workers prayed for the rescinding of the bond. A meeting of the masters was convened, the memorial was submitted to them, and the workers' request was ultimately refused. There were only nine voices raised in support of the memorial. One of the poor tanners is believed

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[15] *O'Cadogan, T. (2006). A Biographical Dictionary of Cork. [online] Available at: Four Courts Press.*

to have remarked that "they will want our voices at another time."[16]

For Co. Cork's political activists, as with their peers throughout Ireland, the topic of Roman Catholic emancipation during this period proved to be a double-edged sword. The mandated dissolution of the Catholic Association may have minimally impacted the dynamics of Co. Cork's sectarian politics; nevertheless, the disenfranchisement of the forty-shilling freeholders could pose a more significant threat to the future of liberalism. A Dublin critic provided an unusual yet illuminating observation, noting that the Cork city middle class shown no worry at the loss of the forty-shilling freeholders, as the latter predominantly belonged to the working class. Liberal agitation in Cork city had transitioned seamlessly from emancipation, to the repeal and reform of the parliamentary franchise in Ireland. The participation of organised, politically-oriented businessmen was a novel aspect. Since the decriminalisation of unions in 1824, tradesmen's associations had changed greatly in terms of public respectability, organisational skills, and diversity, playing a significant role in welcome Daniel O'Connell back to the city in 1832 to advocate for the repeal movement. The event was considered a crucial milestone towards the establishment of the Cork Trades' Association in June of that year. In its initial phases, the Cork Trades Association was not politically orientated but was mainly designed to enhance work opportunities for the tradesmen of Cork city and served as a component of the community's coordinated efforts to address the cholera outbreak and mitigate its most severe impacts. As the 1832 election neared, the Association's prohibition on political discourse was lifted, revealing that the members were proponents of O'Connell, repeal, and reform. By late October, approximately twenty local trade associations had expressed their support for repeal. The Association's departure from neutrality enhanced its appeal and appears to have solidified its position as the political representative of County Cork's trades. Daniel O'Connell

[16] *'Cobbet's Politics Register,' Volume 88 (1835)*

also had expressed his personal backing by visiting an Association meeting in November.[17]

As can be expected by this scenario, in the early decades of the 1800s, Ireland was a place of major political confrontation. Following the Catholic Emancipation of 1829, discourse now turned to the topic of repealing the Act of Union. The British government, alert to this situation, proposed the Irish Disturbances Bill in the House of Commons. The developing middle classes reacted with wrath. Protest meetings were subsequently conducted. The Cork Trades' Association convened a meeting to address the situation. The secretary reported that the government had received petitions from the various parishes. The Cork Trades' Association resolved, on 4 March 1833, to call a meeting of all the Trades of the City, and call-out the intensely disliked legislation proposed by Lord Grey's Whig administration.[18]

Francis Bernard Beamish, of the city's brewing dynasty, was a Liberal, unionist, and naturally less enthused about the rising campaign for the annulment of the union in Cork, despite his strong support for Daniel O'Connell and the successful campaign for Catholic emancipation. Nevertheless, he had endorsed the establishment of the Repeal-supporting Cork Trades Association (CTA) in 1832, and he also served as a member and subsequently as its president (William Crawford Jr., his family's partner in the brewing business, was also a member). The association provided him with a formal address in 1833, after the election of CTA-supported candidates in the general election of 1832, to express their gratitude for his services. Beamish added respectability to the association as an affluent brewer and member of a prominent Protestant family. Subsequently, the CTA

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[17] *Jeffries, H. (2004). Cork: Historical Perspectives. Four Courts Press.*

[18] *Beecher, S. (2005). Cork 365: A Day-by-Day Miscellany of Cork History. Collins Press.*

established a political foundation for Francis Bernard Beamish to pursue a parliamentary candidature in 1837.[19]

During the 1830s, the Cork Trades Association strongly endorsed the city's liberals and facilitated the victorious election of Dr. Baldwin in the 1832 general election. The alliance had endured for ten years, until middle-class constitutionalism had succumbed to its inherent alleged contradictions, and labour interests bitterly recognised that the association had provided no practical advantages to the working class up to that time. In 1832 the masons were also associated with the trades involved in the creation of the Cork Trades' Association, as they were listed as participating in the inaugural procession on 25 June 1832. Like other notable people, Mr. James Daly, a city trader, was similarly involved in establishing the Cork Trades' Association, and this organisation would often critique the actions of the aforementioned Union of Trades. A trade procession pertaining to the visit of the Lord Lieutenant to Cork city on 1 August 1835, was also organised by the Cork Trades' Association.[20]

In 1835 a Petition was made to both Houses of Parliament from the Cork Trades' Association on the adverse effect of the duty on glass made in Ireland :

> *"That the people of Ireland, and most particularly the working classes, have great cause to complain of the duty on glass, both window and flint, which is disproportioned to their means. ... That flint glass is almost in disuse among the working people in Ireland, because of its dearness. .. . That window glass is nearly as much out of reach.... That flint glass is twice as dear now as it had been before the load of Irish taxation was increased, and that several of your Petitioners remember the time when the crate of window glass, which now costs £5 10s. might be had for £1 10s. That*

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[19] O'Driscoll, D. (2015). Beamish & Crawford: The History of an Irish Brewery. Collins Press.

[20] Daly, S. (1978). Cork, a City in Crisis: A History of Labour Conflict and Social Misery, 1870-1872. Tower Books.

tens of thousands of the houses occupied by the agricultural population of Ireland are without even a single pane, .. .

That the residences of the working classes in the cities and towns of Ireland exhibit almost as striking evidence of the oppression of the glass tax, as do the abodes of agriculturalists. Let your Honourable House take a census of the state of the front windows of one of the streets of our city (Boyce's street), and not the poorest street too:—

In it are 49 Houses
Having in front 194 Windows
Designed for 2212 Panes"[21]

In 1838, a contentious strike of shoemakers occurred in Cork city, with the following notice being distributed about establishments embroiled in the strike:

"*The men whose talent and experience have been the means of raising the above Establishment, were obliged to desert the employment in consequence of the incessant tyranny and low wages of the Proprietor, so he has procured some 'Country Men' and 'Runaway Apprentices,' whose inability will not, nor cannot meet Service or Fashion: they endeavour to delude the eye of the Purchaser by means of 'Figured & Coloured Soles,' to hide the most material defects*."[22]

According to Maura Cronin, the craftsmen, despite potential outside influences, tended to establish a distinct organisation comprised of members from the various trade associations and run it in tandem with the parent movement. All skilled artisans, but especially those in dwindling trades, were acutely affected by this tendency throughout the century, and it was most noticeable, she highlights, in the many revival attempts for manufacturing. The majority of these campaigns were started by the middle class, with the trades

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[21] *Westropp, M. (1978). Irish Glass: A History of Glass-Making in Ireland from the Sixteenth Century. Allen Figgis.*

[22] *Workers in Union: Documents and Commentaries on the History of Irish Labour. (1988). Dublin.*

playing a supporting role. However, the trades nearly always started their own resurrection movement that ran alongside the original. The Cork Trades Association for the Encouragement of Irish Manufacture was established in 1832 with the express purpose of serving as a trades' counter-organisation to the middle-class Irish Manufacture Association in the same year. Ten years later, the employer-dominated Cork Board of Trade, which was not on good terms with the trade unions, encountered yet another artisanal movement known as the Mallow Lane Board of Trade. The Co. Cork tradesmen tried their hand at a revival forty years later, after a series of industrial exhibitions attended by affluent businesspeople, gentry, and public figures, with an Artisans' Exhibition showcasing the wares of small businesses and individual artisans instead of the large corporations that had previously dominated the shows.

Maura Cronin also highlights that the exact social composition of the Cork Trades Association in 1832 is challenging to ascertain. Out of around 1,200 members, just 77 names remain, and the social backgrounds of only 58 of these can be determined. The anonymity of most members implies modest social backgrounds; however, among the notable individuals in the association, 24.68 percent were manufacturers and master tradesmen, 20.78 percent were merchants and retailers, 12.99 percent were professionals, and 7.79 percent were classified as gentlemen, while only 9.09 percent were explicitly identified as journeymen, and 24.68 percent remained unclassified. Artisans who joined the Cork Trades Association and the People's Hall were effectively coerced by the radical leadership of shopkeepers and pawnbrokers into a power war against the merchant-dominated Cork Chamber of Commerce.

Cronin also notes that, in 1835, the Cork Trades Association contemplated rebranding itself as the People's Society, and the newly established radical headquarters, inaugurated two years later in the city, was designated as the People's Hall. In the late 1830s, restrictions were imposed on the democratisation of language. O'Connell's political collaboration with the Whigs led to an extensive local campaign for the cooperation of what were regarded as all

the prominent noblemen and gentlemen of the county, with the democratic slogans of previous years seemed to be conspicuously absent. Although a rather superficial acknowledgement of 'the people' persisted in after-dinner toasts and platform speeches, it was not until a decade later, following the Paris revolution of February 1848, that what would now be deemed as populist rhetoric regained widespread usage. From the mid-19th century, radical local political entities, such as the Cork Trades' Association and its derivative, the People's Hall — were controlled by relatively prosperous factions. The political significance of the latter two entities in the politicisation of artisans must be emphasised, as it was through interaction with and influence from their discontented petty bourgeois leadership that local artisans, previously organised solely under their respective trade union affiliations, integrated into the political mainstream. Although these seemingly radical affiliations sprang from a minor local power conflict between competing middle-class factions, their discourse was framed in the language of democratic ideals.

Workers' associations in Ireland and Great Britain often possessed middle-class links. Over the course of the century, the trade societies of County Cork consistently operated in a similar manner. During the 1832 election, the Cork Trades Association solicited support for the Repeal movement by dispatching delegations to the Catholic clergy and the inhabitants of affluent residential districts, whereas the People's Hall in the late 1830s primarily relied on the benevolence of a limited number of local middle-class patrons for financial sustenance. The persistent attempts to establish a local trades council in Cork city from the 1850s forward were characterised by a consistent reliance on, as well as solicitation of middle-class patronage. In 1861, the incumbent mayor, Sir John Arnott, was appointed honorary president by the initial ephemeral trades council, while its successor in 1864 sought the backing of philanthropic local entrepreneurs by emphasising its belief that struggling trade societies should facilitate the emigration of their members instead of resorting to 'strikes and related afflictions.' The Mechanics' Hall of the early 1870s, thereafter linked to the militant nationalist movement, was established in part due to

philanthropic middle-class efforts to enhance the moral and intellectual status of the trades. For the Roman Catholic Bishop, Dr. Delaney and other local entrepreneurs, the Mechanics' Hall represented more of a fusion between a mechanics' institute and a temperance society than a trades council, with the initial calls for funding from the trades reflecting this altruistic paternalism.

Lastly, Maura Cronin also discusses that, although not limited to the trades, the 1832 Cork Trades Association served as a pressure organisation for the rebirth of manufacturing and the artisans' response to the dominance of the local upper-middle class Repeal movement. By forming their own Operative Repeal Association and reserving a meeting place "for the use of the working classes," the city trade organisations once again attempted to maintain their political identity in 1842. In particular, the noticeable presence of unionised craftspeople at citywide nationalist rallies beginning in the 1860s, both as members of the trades council and as banner-bearers for their respective trade societies, served to highlight the largely independent character of "the trades" within the realm of popular politics. Nationalist pressure organisations courted the support of the city's tradespeople throughout the century, despite the fact that the two groups often clashed. The success of any popular proposal hinged on trade contributions and support, which were present at every Fenian rally. Constitutional politicians were well aware of the formidable influence of "the trades" as a whole. By cautioning his colleague not to say anything regarded as harmful to the Cork city trades in the late 1890s, the local politician was only stating the obvious. The craftsman who, in the 1830s, might be mocked or disregarded by the public, clergy, and press had become a part of the local political and social systems.[23]

In June 1870, an incident of labour-related violence erupted in Cork. By the end of the month, peace was restored in the city, following a period of unrest that resulted in injuries to individuals and damage to property. It was documented that,

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[23] Cronin, M. (1994). Country, Class or Craft?: The Politicisation of the Skilled Artisan in Nineteenth-Century Cork. Cork University Press.

while labourers had the legal right to organise and seek improved working conditions, the events that took place also indicated a breakdown in relations between employers and employees. Although calm returned to the city, a full reconciliation had not yet been achieved.

An earlier strike by tailors appeared to have marked the beginning of wider industrial action, as strikes became more common among the labouring classes. Employees from several large establishments ceased work, with women workers joining the movement and resulting in the temporary suspension of operations at two flax and cotton factories. Efforts to resolve the tailors' strike were underway, and it was hoped that a settlement would encourage others to return to work.

Employers were encouraged to address any legitimate grievances raised by workers, as cooperative solutions were seen as beneficial to both parties. However, incidents of violence and public disorder during the early stages of the conflict were noted. A number of individuals not directly involved in the labour disputes engaged in destructive actions, including assaults and property damage. At a meeting of the Trades, resolutions were passed condemning the violence and distancing the organised workers from the rioters. Reports suggested that economic hardship was unlikely to have been the primary cause of the unrest, as employment opportunities had remained available. Historically, Cork city had been regarded as an orderly city, and previous disputes between employers and employees had generally been resolved without major incidents. Efforts by the Trades to dissociate themselves from the violence reportedly had a calming effect. After public statements disavowing responsibility for the disorder, a notable reduction in disturbances was observed, a few days later, no further attempts at rioting were reported.

The scale of the earlier violence was significant, with over one hundred individuals injured over the course of two days. The police sustained substantial injuries, particularly during confrontations in narrow alleys, where they were subjected to missiles thrown from buildings. Numerous arrests were made,

and court proceedings were expected to follow. The unrest caused considerable disruption to business, with concerns raised that the recovery of the City of Cork's commerce might take some time in the aftermath of such violence. The Butter Market, a vital component of Cork's economy, was particularly affected when porters employed at the weigh-house temporarily suspended work in pursuit of higher wages. In many cases, employers agreed to the workers' demands, and the suspension was brief.

Negotiations between tailors and their employers progressed towards a settlement, and other groups of operatives showed signs of a willingness to reach agreements. The involvement of respected citizens in facilitating discussions contributed to the likelihood of a return to normal activity. Although the disturbances left a physical and social impact, it was anticipated that with continued efforts from all parties, visible signs of unrest would soon diminish.[24]

In 1872, the Cork trades' societies formed part of a procession in honour of the Fenian leader, Bryan Dillon.[25] For organisations such as the Cork Trades' Association, the relationship between trade unionism and politics during much of the late 19th century was consistently challenging for the former. Many labourers tended to align themselves with the move for political independence and 'nationalism,' as they shared the nationalist consensus that the Irish economy was being harmed by the 'free trade' dogma of the United Kingdom.[26]

For example, in 1880, it was reported in the '*Cork Examiner*' that members of the Cork Trades (primarily labourers) formed a procession along the New Line, proceeding from Victoria Cross, towards Ballincollig, for the arrival of

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[24] *Freemans Journal 29/6/1870*

[25] *Dundalk Democrat 31/8/1872*

[26] *Murphy, J. (2003). Ireland: A Social, Cultural and Literary History, 1791-1891. Four Courts Press.*

nationalist leader, Charles Stewart Parnell MP, in his horse drawn carriage at Cork city.[27]

[27] *Cork Examiner 24/9/1880*

The bustling life of working people in the Cork City of old.

RISING VOICES
BREAKING THE SILENCE, 1881-1899

A special meeting of the Skibbereen branch of the United Trades Association and Industrial League was held at the Temperance Hall in September 1881, to consider what actions could be taken to secure the use of the Lough Mills, located near the town, for the establishment of a woollen factory. The intention behind this proposal was to obtain the premises from the landlords, owners, or their agents at a fair rent, in order to provide employment for the poor labouring classes and artisans in the town and surrounding area. Mr. Daniel Spillane, who served as branch secretary of the local Land League, presided over the meeting. Following extensive discussion, the hon. secretary was instructed to correspond with Messrs Carroll, Bird, and Sullivan regarding the matter. It was further resolved that the issue would subsequently be referred to the Cork Trades Association for settlement between Messrs Carroll and the tenants.[28]

In August 1883, the following letters received by Mr. Michael McCarthy, hon. Secretary of the Cork Trades Association, in connection with a visit of several delegates from the North and West of Ireland to the Exhibition, and were published in the '*Cork Examiner*':

> ***United Trades' Council of Belfast, College Street, 10 August 1883***
>
> *Dear Sir,*
>
> *It gave me great pleasure to inform you that, at the first meeting of our Council held following our return to Ulster, I was instructed to convey to you—and, through you, to the trades of Cork—the heartfelt thanks of the trades here for the many kindnesses extended to us during our visit as delegates to the South. Every citizen of Cork with whom we came into*

[28] *Cork Examiner 22/9/1881*

contact treated us warmly, but our gratitude is especially extended to yourself and the other officers of your Association.

I was also instructed to express the hope that we may soon have an opportunity to reciprocate the amity, courtesy, and hospitality of which we were the grateful recipients during our all-too-brief stay among you.

I need scarcely add that my own feelings are entirely in accord with those of our Council.

Yours fraternally,
Alex Bowman,
Secretary

Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders' Society, Wolff Street, Belfast, 10 August 1883

Dear Sir,

I have been instructed by the members of the Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders' Society, Belfast, to extend their sincere thanks to you and the other members of the Cork Trades' Association for the consistent kindness and courtesy shown to our representatives during their very pleasant visit to Cork.

I am also to express our appreciation for the labours of the Executive Committee of the Cork Exhibition, in their efforts to improve the condition of our fellow countrymen—not only through the immediate employment provided, but also by instilling that moral stimulus which arises from self-reliance combined with wise instruction.

We sincerely hope that the Cork Exhibition may prove to be both a financial and national success.

Yours fraternally,
William Crotty,
Secretary, Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders' Society

Congregated Trades of the City of Limerick, Mechanics' Institute, August 1883

Dear Sir,

We wish to forward a copy of a resolution passed by the members of this Institute on 23 July:

Proposed by Mr Michael Murphy (Guild of Tailors) and seconded by Mr Patrick O'Brien:

> *"That we, the Congregated Trades of the City of Limerick, having heard the account given by our officers and delegates who attended the Exhibition ceremonies in Cork, hereby tender our sincere thanks to the United Trades of Cork for the courteous and hospitable reception extended to our representatives on that memorable occasion. We also wish to thank Messrs Daniel O'Leary and John Broderick, of the Guilds of Bakers and Millers respectively, for the special attention they provided."*

Yours fraternally,
Denis Gavin, President
John Hogan, Secretary[29]

In May 1884, a meeting of the Cork Trades Association took place, with the Worshipful Mayor of Cork Corporation presiding. The aim of the meeting was to revise the rules of the organisation, with a view to improving its impact as a representative organisation for the working-class. A large attendance was reported in the press. Resolutions in support of this initiative were passed unanimously.[30]

In 1885, the president and secretary of the Cork Trades' Association were present at the launch of the Exhibition of Irish Artisans, held in Dublin.[31]

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[29] *Cork Examiner 17/8/1883*

[30] *Cork Examiner 23/5/1884*

[31] *Skibbereen Eagle 27/6/1885*

In 1886, at a meeting of the Mallow branch of the Irish Land League, the Secretary reported that the collection in aid of the Sexton Fund had reached a total of £16. He then read a series of resolutions received from the Cork Trades' Association concerning the promotion and support of home manufacture. City councillor Mr D. Mullane, T.C., proposed the adoption of the resolutions. He expressed his strong desire to see Irish manufacturers supported and Irish labourers employed, so that local millers could compete successfully against foreign imports. Mr Samuel Sheehan, T.C., also a city councillor seconded the motion. The Chairman remarked that Irish-grown wheat alone could never be sufficient to feed the population — it would not even suffice to provide breakfast. Therefore, it was absolutely necessary to import foreign wheat. Mr O'Leary responded by clarifying that the objection was not to wheat imports in general, but specifically to the importation of ground wheat. Mr Mullane agreed. Mr O'Leary further stated that ground wheat imports were destroying native labour and forcing local mills to remain idle. If all wheat arrived unground, as it originally had, it would generate twice as much employment for Irish workers. Mr Mullane added that there was no objection to the importation of raw materials, as foreign supply was deemed to be necessary. However, he insisted, local industries needed to be protected and supported. Mr McCarthy, the Secretary, then drew attention to another industry mentioned in the resolutions — match production. He noted that there were two match factories in Cork employing over 200 people, both of which were facing closure due to a lack of local support and patronage. The Chairman then put the resolutions to a vote, and they were unanimously adopted.[32]

In 1888, the Cork Trades Council would find relevance, through another medium, in England, where a battle for the growing Jewish voting base had taken place. Edvin Montagu's Liberals had clashed with the the Conservatives on the matter. The Conservatives reacted appropriately. During a Primrose League meeting at St. Paul's Hall, Goulston Street, on 4 July, Colonel Trench criticised

[32] *Cork Examiner 16/3/1886*

Montagu for allegedly attempting to incite animosity within the Hebrew community towards their "Anglo-Saxon" counterparts. He, however, claimed that he would enlighten the Jewish community of the genuine sentiments of the National grouping in Ireland towards them and their counterparts abroad. He possessed approximately two or three reports detailing the persecution of Jews in Limerick in 1884 and again at the conclusion of 1887; he substantiated his claims by citing a report from the Cork correspondent of the '*Dublin Daily Express*' dated 9 March, in which the Cork Trades Council unanimously called for the expulsion of Jews from the city, asserting that they were undermining legitimate commerce. One delegate described the Jewish community as 'crucifying gipsies' and suggested they should be killed.[33]

In April 1888, a meeting of the Cork Trades Association took place, at which about 300 people were present, to consider the question of social outlets closing early on a Sunday. An amendment, to the effect where that towns had benefitted greatly in circumstances where closing had been enforced was defeated by a majority of 280.[34]

Assisted by Michael Davitt, the Irish Democratic Trade and Labour Federation was established in January 1890 in Co. Cork, enrolling agricultural and other unorganised workers. The secretary was Michael Austin, an officer of the Cork Trades Council, who became a Member of Parliament in 1892, when Davitt convinced the anti-Parnellite Nationalists to select labour-orientated political representatives as their parliamentary candidates.[35]

In March 1890, it was believed that the strike in the bacon trade would be resolved within a short period. Contrary to earlier reports, it was believed Mr Shaw had not declined the arbitration of Mr Michael Davitt, which had been proposed

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[33] *Fishman, W.J. (1988). East End 1888: Life in a London Borough among the Labouring Poor. Temple University Press*

[34] *Freemans Journal 24/4/1888*

[35] *Irish Peasants: Violence & Political Unrest, 1780-1914 (1983). University of Wisconsin Press.*

by the Cork Trades' Association. Additionally, the Mayors of Cork, Waterford, and Limerick had issued an urgent appeal to both employers and workers, requesting that they permit the arrangement of arbitration to bring the dispute to a settlement.[36]

As per an 1891 debate in the House of Commons, as reported by the '*Cork Examiner*,' Mr. James Christopher Flynn, an anti-Parnellite Home Ruler, claimed that the Cork Trades' Association had written to Mr Parnell, but allegedly had never received the courtesy of a reply. This, it was pointed out, was the same man who claimed to be so eager to support the tradesmen and labourers of the country. Flynn also claimed that, in reality, it was suggested that Mr Parnell aimed to dominate every interest in the nation. Flynn also asserted, in his opinion, that it was essential to defeat Mr Parnell before the upcoming election. This was met with applause from Flynn's colleagues. It was also necessary, he claimed, to defeat the Tories, and only by overcoming both Mr Parnell and the Tory party could true and lasting prosperity and enduring nationhood be secured for Ireland. This statement was subsequently met prolonged applause from his own political camp.[37]

In the House of Commons, in February 1892, the Cork Harbour (Pilotage) Bill had been scheduled for its second reading, but the matter was postponed until 10th March. Mr. John Morrogh asked the First Lord of the Admiralty whether he had received a resolution passed on the 11th of the month by the Cork Trades' Association concerning the Haulbowline Docks, and whether he was prepared to initiate inquiries with a view to advancing the objectives outlined in the resolution. Lord George Hamilton responded that provision had been made in the estimates for the current and following year to complete the installation of the necessary plant to enable the docks at Haulbowline to serve the purposes for which they had originally been intended. He added that once the items

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[36] *Nation 8/3/1890*

[37] *Cork Examiner 3/3/1891*

which were already specified had been constructed, the arrangements would be practically complete.[38]

In February 1895, a meeting was held in the Antient Concert Rooms, Dublin, to advocate for the reprieve of John Twiss, who had been sentenced to death at the recent Cork Assizes. There was a large attendance. Mr. James Walker was appointed to the chair. In his opening remarks, he stated that the attendance exceeded the expectations of the organisers. He explained that the purpose of the meeting was to appeal for mercy or, more precisely, to request a review of justice, based on public conscience.

Mr. Oldham read a series of resolutions, including:

- Approval of the actions taken by the Cork Corporation, the Fermoy Town Commissioners, the Mallow Town Commissioners, and other public bodies in calling for the commutation of Twiss's death sentence.

- A call for the Lord Lieutenant and the Chief Secretary for Ireland to reconsider the evidence upon which Twiss was convicted, suggesting that there was a strong case for a further inquiry.

- A note of the widespread public support for Twiss's reprieve, demonstrated by a large number of signatures from individuals of various social, religious, and political backgrounds across Ireland.

Alderman John Kennedy proposed the adoption of the resolutions. Mr. W. J. Leahy, T.C., seconded the motion, remarking that the Twiss case merited special attention from the government. Mr. J. B. O'Brien supported the resolutions, expressing his view that Twiss had been wrongfully convicted. Mr. M. A. Manning spoke next, noting the scale of the support, mentioning that he had received 14,000 signatures from the provinces and 8,000 from Dublin, while the Mayor of Cork had secured over 9,000 signatures from County Cork. Additional support had also come from the Irish

[38] *Cork Examiner 26/2/1892*

community in both England and Scotland, with over 15,000 further signatures gathered by that time.

Mr. P. H. Meade, Mayor of Cork, thanked those present on behalf of the Twiss Reprieve Committee. He called for a full inquiry into the case and reported that the jury members from Twiss's trial had begun signing a memorial for his reprieve. He encouraged those present to sign the petition. Mr. J. H. Jolly and Mr. Fitzgerald also spoke before the meeting concluded. Soon after, a deputation including the Mayor of Cork, Mr. M. A. Manning (editor of the '*Weekly Independent*'), Mr. P. R. Fitzgibbon (solicitor for Twiss), and Mr. Jolly (President of the Cork Trades Association) had met with Sir David Harrel, Under-Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant, at Dublin Castle.

The Mayor presented the petition, which had been signed by citizens of Cork and several districts of County Kerry. Mr. Manning presented the '*Weekly Independent*' memorial, emphasising that the signatories represented a broad cross-section of society, including members of Parliament, clergy of all denominations, magistrates, and members of public bodies. He noted that many signatures were collected by return post, also suggesting that the campaign had enjoyed broad and spontaneous support. Sir David Harrel stated he would immediately inform the Lord Lieutenant and the Chief Secretary by telegraph and would send the original petitions to the Irish Office in London that evening. The deputation then withdrew. A synopsis of the signatures attached to the petition was subsequently provided.[39]

In August 1895, the Dublin Trades' Association arranged to present an address to the Council of the Cork Trades' Association, expressing their appreciation for the hospitality they received during their visit to a recent Trades Congress held in Cork city. A second presentation was scheduled, during which addresses would be delivered by both the Dublin Trades' Council and the Cork United Trades' Association to the Mayor at the Municipal Buildings.

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[39] *Kerry Weekly Reporter 9/2/1895*

During the previous Congress, numerous trade union representatives from across Ireland were hosted in Cork city. The Mayor extended a formal welcome to the visitors, and the local organisers made efforts to ensure their stay was pleasant. The delegates had reportedly left Cork city with positive impressions of the city and its people. The planned presentation of addresses was intended as a formal acknowledgement of the reception provided and was regarded as an example of the cordial relations which were maintained between trade union organisations throughout Ireland.[40]

In February 1896, Mr Jolley, President of the Cork United Trades, stated that at a meeting of the trades, the question of the Guinness label, which had had been discussed. A resolution was passed condemning what was described as the boycotting of Cork brewers by Messrs Guinness, and authorising both the President and the Secretary of the Trades to address the matter. The resolution passed by the Cork Trades' Council read:

> *"That we, the Cork Trades' Council, respectfully call on the vintners of the city and county of Cork to refuse to sign the proposed agreement with Messrs Guinness and Co, as we believe such an agreement to be detrimental to the staple trade of this city and county, and if carried into effect, would seriously infringe on the already limited sources of employment in the city and county."*

Mr Jolley indicated that there appeared to be unanimous opposition to the agreement among those present. He expressed confidence that the vintners would refuse to accept the agreement, regardless of any attempts made to persuade them otherwise. While acknowledging that some traders had already accepted the label, he suggested that these individuals might reconsider their decision. Mr Jolley further noted that while the arrangements between vintners and breweries were not the direct concern of the trades bodies, it was within their remit to support and protect local industry. He

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[40] *Evening Herald 3/8/1895*

characterised the action by Messrs Guinness as an attempt to undermine local manufacturing, which could potentially lead to job losses. He also suggested that if unemployment among workers increased, the publicans would likely be among those affected. Mr Murphy, from Passage, spoke as both a tradesman and a publican, stating that the adoption of the label could have a seriously detrimental effect on farmers, tradesmen, and mechanics.[41]

Later that month, at a meeting of Cork Corporation, a deputation from the Cork Trades Council attended a meeting with the committee regarding the proposed scheme for constructing labourers' and artisans' dwellings. The President of the Council, Mr J. H. Jolley, stated that the purpose of the deputation was to reinforce a resolution passed by the Trades Council concerning the Corporation's plans to build nearly one hundred houses in various parts of the city. While the Trades Council acknowledged and appreciated the city Corporation's efforts to alleviate the overcrowding by constructing these houses, they expressed disagreement with the locations selected for the developments. Regarding the proposed artisans' houses, the Trades Council considered them unsuitable, and not reflective of their expectations for a respectable working man's home. Mr Jolley noted that in several other Irish cities, more appropriate sites had been chosen for similar projects. He cited Dublin as an example, where it had not been necessary to build such houses in remote suburban areas; instead, more centrally located houses had been rapidly occupied. The deputation requested that the Corporation pause its plans and consult with representatives of the working class to determine more appropriate locations and designs for the housing.

Mr Taylor reiterated a financial analysis of the scheme, which he had previously presented to a Trades Council meeting. Mr D. F. Meade, Secretary of the Council, highlighted the inadequacy of some houses already constructed and suggested alternative sites, such as areas off the Marsh and North Main Street, which he believed could accommodate suitable dwellings for both artisans and

[41] *Cork Examiner 8/2/1896*

labourers. Mr Burnside also addressed the financial implications of the project. The Chairman of the committee welcomed the deputation and indicated that he shared many of their concerns, particularly regarding the ineffectiveness of building cottages for artisans and labourers on the outskirts of the city. He assured the deputation that their views would receive full and careful consideration.[42]

In May 1896, at a meeting of Cork Corporation, a letter was received from Mr W. Healy, Secretary of the Killarney Town Commissioners, addressing concerns raised by the Cork Trades' Council regarding the awarding of an advertising contract from the Killarney Tourist Association. The President of the Cork Trades' Council had publicly criticised the decision to engage Emmerson Brothers of Manchester instead of a local firm, Guy & Co. of Cork, suggesting that their choice had undermined local industry. The Executive Committee of the institution defended their actions, explaining that the tenders invited were not merely for the printing of posters, but also included extensive distribution work across Great Britain. While the printing costs alone from Guy & Co. were competitive, Emmerson Brothers offered superior terms: printing in seven colours on whole sheets (compared to six colours on half sheets from Guy & Co.), a more effective and reliable distribution network, and the inclusion of additional services such as the use of their offices in London and Manchester to promote the campaign. Furthermore, Guy & Co. admitted they would have to subcontract the distribution work, could not guarantee the quality, and their overall cost was significantly higher.

The Committee emphasised that artistic presentation and reliable posting were crucial to the success of their advertising efforts, and that favouring a local company at the expense of the campaign's effectiveness, in their view, would not have been a responsible decision. They acknowledged that if the contract had been for printing alone, other factors might have justified choosing the Cork city firm; however, given the broader requirements, they believed their decision was justified. They expressed regret that misleading

[42] *Cork Examiner 19/2/1896*

statements had been made publicly, potentially harming the reputation of the Association, which was working towards boosting Irish trade and economy.

After the reading of the letter, the Mayor suggested that the Council drop any further discussion on the matter. To reinforce the point, Alderman Julian read a telegram from Mr Crossley, President of the Irish Tourist Association, which strongly refuted the allegations. Crossley stated that all posters were indeed printed in Ireland and reiterated his commitment to supporting home industries. The city Council appeared to accept the explanations provided and moved on from the controversy, recognising the suggestion that the broader goal of encouraging trade development should not be undermined by disputes over comparatively minor issues.[43]

In November 1896, Mr Oldham, B.L., delivered the third in a series of lectures organised under the Sarrington Trust at the Assembly Rooms. The subject of the lecture was "Trades Unions and Strikes," and it attracted considerable interest. Mr J. H. Jolley, President of the Cork Trades Union, presided over the meeting.[44]

In March 1897, at the close of the weekly meeting of the Cork United Trades' Association, Mr. J. H. Jolley — who had served as President of the Association during the years 1882–83 and again in 1895–96 — was presented with a large, handsomely framed portrait of himself, along with a purse of sovereigns, as a token of appreciation from the trades of Cork. The tablet on the frame bore the following inscription:

> *"Presented to J. H. Jolley by the trades of Cork in appreciation of his services as President, 1882–83, 1895 and 1896."*

Following the presentation, Mr. Jolley addressed the assembly. He said that he found it difficult to express his feelings as he

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[43] *Kerry Sentinel 13/5/1896*

[44] *Evening Echo 21/11/1896*

would have wished, and that the position he occupied that night quite overwhelmed him. Recalling his first term as President, he described it as an interesting period for the trades of Co. Cork. At that time, the Cork Exhibition was organised in the same hall. The trades took it up with great enthusiasm and made it a notable success. To achieve this, they joined a common platform with their brethren from the North. Mr. Jolley recounted that when he travelled to the North and explained that he was the Protestant President of the Cork trades, seeking cooperation, he was received with open arms. He believed that through that effort, they had built a "bridge across the Boyne," bringing benefit to the whole country. He noted that the Exhibition had been a great success, and that scholarships still existed in the Cork School of Art as a result.

During his second term of office, they succeeded in establishing the Trades Library, and he was gratified to find that it had also become a great success. In closing, Mr. Jolley again expressed his heartfelt gratitude for the handsome presentation. He said he was proud of it, and intended to pass it down to his children in the hope that it would inspire them to follow the example he had set. This was met with a great applause.[45]

A few days later, it was reported that a largely attended meeting of the trades of Co. Cork was held at the Mechanics' Hall, Grattan Street, for the purpose of considering the present depression in trade and how far it was affected by the importation of foreign materials and workmanship. The meeting also aimed to address the strikes then existing in the city. Mr. J. Kelleher, President of the United Trades' Council, presided.

Opening the proceedings, the Chairman stated that public meetings were necessary to show unscrupulous employers that the trades were organised and would not be easily attacked . He explained that resolutions would be submitted for their consideration, dealing with the importation of goods and the conduct of certain employers who refused to

[45] *Irish Daily Independent 20/3/1897*

recognise legitimate labour. Mr. J. H. Jolley proposed the first resolution:

> *"That we consider it unjust that, in the printing and allied trades, large merchants and shopkeepers are sending substantial orders out of the city, although the work could be equally well executed locally in terms of workmanship and price. We therefore ask them to discontinue this practice, which is detrimental to our business and contributes to enforced idleness among our men".*

Mr. Jolley pointed out that even tea bags and posters encouraging people to visit shops were often produced outside Cork, which was a disgrace, especially when local employers had the facilities and expertise to meet the demands. Mr. Kiely seconded the resolution, praising the high standards of Cork's typographical workers, and noting that the practice of outsourcing must end. The resolution was adopted unanimously. Mr. T. Coleman then proposed:

> *"That this public meeting of the trades of Cork condemn in the strongest terms the action of Messrs. Dwyer of the Lee Boot Manufacturing Company, for their arbitrary and high-handed treatment of employees, particularly their refusal to submit an existing dispute to arbitration, forcing workers to break up their homes and seek employment abroad. We also condemn their refusal to receive a deputation from the Cork Trades' Council, whose aim was reconciliation. We call on all trades and labour organisations to support the Boot-Rivetters' Society against such tyrannical conduct".*

Mr. Lane (Boot-Rivetters) seconded, detailing the history of the dispute and refuting claims that high wages were to blame for business troubles. He pointed out that former Cork workers were now earning better wages elsewhere, including Glasgow. He emphasised the Boot-Rivetters' willingness to submit to arbitration, having nothing to fear . The resolution was adopted unanimously. Mr. Joseph Jones then proposed:

> *"We, the Alliance Cabinet Makers and Furnishing Trades, respectfully call on the public and those managing furnishing*

shops in the city to support local trades, aiming to restore a once-thriving cabinet-making industry in Cork".

He lamented that where once 200 cabinet-makers had been employed, now there remained only around 30, due to a lack of local support. Mr. D. Daly seconded, and the resolution was carried. Mr. T. Kiely proposed the next resolution:

> *"That we, the trades of Cork, assembled in public meeting, strongly condemn the action of several employers in the tailoring trade where strikes and lockouts exist, for employing non-union and blackleg labour. We pledge to assist the Tailors' Society by every means at our disposal."*

Mr. Thomas Judge seconded, and the resolution passed unanimously. Mr. P. Dunan proposed:

> *"That this public meeting condemns the action of the Cork Bakery and Refreshment Rooms Company, South Terrace, for refusing to submit their dispute with the Bakers' Society to conciliation or arbitration. As a mark of disapproval, we pledge individually and collectively to support the Bakers' Society through all moral means and call upon the working classes of Cork city and county to do likewise."*

Mr. D. F. Meade seconded, with support from Mr. D. O'Leary, and it was carried. Mr. Thomas Punch proposed a resolution calling upon the building trades and the public to support firms employing trades unionists and paying union rates of wages. This was seconded by Mr. Woods and adopted. Mr. Anthony Brady proposed:

> *"That we, the trades of Cork, assembled in public meeting, strongly condemn certain boot-warehouses for sending orders away to outside firms, thereby depriving local workers of employment and deceiving the public."*

Mr. Carey seconded, and the resolution was carried. Mr. Jolley moved into the second chair, and a hearty vote of thanks was passed to Mr. Kelleher for presiding, on the

motion of Mr. Kiely. Mr. Kelleher briefly responded, and the proceedings concluded at 6 o'clock in the evening.[46]

In April 1897, the '*Irish Daily Independent*' reported that Delegates to the Fourth Irish Trades Union Congress, which was to be held in Waterford that month, were currently being elected by various trade and labour bodies. It was, the article claimed, an old complaint that the sending of delegates to congresses, either in this country or in England, often resembled more of a holiday trip, rather than a serious matter of business. Therefore, it was suggested that it would be beneficial if the delegates were selected with a view to advancing the cause of labour. To achieve this, the newspaper claimed that those with a strong grasp of industrial economics, who could be relied upon to focus solely on business, should be sent to Waterford. It was highlighted how much importance was attached to this special, annual political gathering, and the selection of representatives played a critical role in the potential organising power that may develop from it.

It was highlighted also that one of the latest "Fabian Tracts" issued was a pamphlet by Mrs. Sydney Webb, concerning the condition of labour in Great Britain and Ireland during the "longest reign." It was available and contained useful information for Irish students of the Labour movement, and was claimed to be notably free from the display of hobbies or theories typical of the school of thought in which, as reported, Mrs. Webb and her husband had held prominent positions in the socialist movement at that time. The tract, they suggested, was well worth perusal.

It was documented that in the coming May, some of the leading trade unionists from Dublin would be invited to tender evidence in London before a Committee of the House of Commons regarding the operation of the "Fair Wages Resolution" in connection with public contracts in Ireland. Mr. Brennan, of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, it was believed, would represent his organisation, while the building

[46] *Evening Echo 22/3/1897*

trades' interests would be represented by the Vice-President of the Trades Council, Mr. John Fitzpatrick. It was likely, according to the paper, that representatives from other trades would also provide evidence at the same time, although no concrete details had yet been finalised.

A fresh trade union initiative from the cork-cutters was described in the paper as a positive one. In future, all it was noted that all corks produced at the Trade Union Cork Factory would bear a brand denoting where the cork has been cut. Trade unionists and those sympathetic to the workers' efforts to revive this branch of home industry were asked to be vigilant in ensuring they only purchase liquors bottled with locally made corks. Traders, too, the article claimed, would find it to their advantage to use the domestic product.[47]

At the Irish Trades Union Congress that year, Mr. J. Kelleher (President of the Cork Trades Council) proposed that the Congress strongly protest against the continued importation of foreign-made goods into this country and consider such importation to be the chief cause of the great detriment to the trade and labour of Ireland. In Cork, he remarked, the Carpenters' Society were fighting a big battle against the importation of shop fronts and shop fittings. The workers themselves were responsible for this state of affairs by supporting houses that engaged in importation. Unless they practiced what they preached, he believed that they would not hope for improvement . Mr. Joseph O'Brien, also of the Cork Trades' Council, seconded the resolution. He suggested that he could give the Congress some glaring examples of importation into Cork. A large order had recently been sent out of Cork for a church organ, the money for which had been subscribed in Cork city.[48]

A meeting of the Cork United Trades' Association took place in June 1897 at the Mechanics' Hall, Grattan Street. Mr J. Kelliher, President, occupied the chair. The following trades

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[47] *Irish Daily Independent 8/4/1897*

[48] *Cork Examiner 8/6/1897*

were represented: typographical, plasterers, masons, carpenters, engineers, mill sawyers, tailors, railway servants, coopers, farriers, bakers, coach makers, cabinet makers, brewery workmen, and the boot riveters. The President drew attention to a leading article that had recently appeared in the '*West Cork Eagle*,' and expressed concern that it constituted a wanton attack on trades unionism. He suggested that each delegate should procure a copy of the '*Eagle*,' read the article in question, and prepare to discuss it at the meeting scheduled for the following week. He stressed that the matter was serious, and for that reason, he recommended postponing any discussion until the next meeting. This proposal was agreed to amongst those who were present.[49]

Later that month, a mass meeting, described as one of the largest and most representative held in Cork city, took place at approximately four o'clock in the Mechanics' Hall, Grattan Street. The meeting was organised to endorse the Irish National Programme, as formulated at the Conference held in Dublin in May, attended by representatives of all branches of the Irish railway service. Mr. Kelleher, President of the Cork Trades Council, presided over the proceedings. Among those present were the Right Worshipful P. D. Meade, Mayor of Cork Corporation, as well as Alderman H. Crofts; Mr. P. J. Tynan, LLB, Secretary A.S.R.S.; Mr. J. H. Jolley, Mr. F. Gleeson, Mr. S. Scannell (Cork United Trades' Association); and many representatives from various trades and unions. Delegates from various different industries in the city attended, representing typographical workers, plasterers, masons, carpenters, engineers, mill sawyers, tailors, railway servants, coopers, farriers, bakers, coach makers, cabinet makers, brewery workmen, and boot rivetters, among others. There was also strong representation from the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS) and related unions. The meeting had endorsed the Irish National Programme unanimously. Various speakers addressed the gathering, voicing strong support for the aims set out at the Dublin Conference. They stressed the importance of unity across all sectors of the Irish working classes and the significance of a

[49] *Southern Star 19/6/1897*

common national policy in the advancement of their collective interests.[50]

The meeting of the Council of Cork United Trades in September 1897 was presided over by the President, Mr. J. Kelleher, and the following trades were represented: Typographical, plasterers, tailors, brewery workmen, cabinetmakers, engineers, carpenters, farriers, boot rivetters, coopers, bakers, coach-makers, and stonecutters. In reference to the movement of the Trades Council to have inserted in the new bill to be presented to Parliament by the Corporation for the extension of borrowing powers a clause dealing with the municipal voting, the following letters were read:

> *"31, Great George's Street,*
> *September 10th, '97.*
> *Dear Sir, — I received your circular. I regret very much not being able to attend the meeting of the Council yesterday. I will attend in the future and vote for Alderman Crean's motion. Your request is very reasonable. If we had Home Rule, we would have had household suffrage many years ago.*
> *Yours truly,*
> *THOMAS CREAN."*

> *Cork, September 17th, '97.*
> *Dear Sir, — In reply to yours of the 16th inst to hand, I will have much pleasure in supporting Ald. Crean's motion regarding the Municipal franchise. It seems very inconsistent to me that a man can vote for a member of Parliament but not vote for a town councillor.*
> *Yours truly,*
> *MICHAEL M'CARTHY."*

A circular was received from the Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, pointing out that a fierce struggle had been going on in the engineering and allied trades for the past eight weeks, that the employers were making strenuous efforts to further extend the area of operations, and to overwhelm the societies engaged in a

[50] *Cork Examiner 28/6/1897*

financial strain beyond endurance. The circular appealed to all trades for help.

The President stated that it behooved every Trade Unionist to come to the front and show that it was not by talk they were Trade Unionists. He believed they would not be sincere Trade Unionists if they did not support the engineers in that dispute. He was sure that if they supported the engineers, they would crush those unscrupulous employers who were trying to break up the trade organisations. If a dispute arose in any town, the organisation was attacked in every quarter, but they would continue to fight the capitalist who would try to crush the unfortunate worker.

Mr. Kiely (Typographical), after explaining that he did not like to always speak at the meetings, and wishing that other members would come forward, said that if the engineers lost in that fight, they might look forward to the next half-century of long hours. If they won, the 48-hour rule would apply in every other business. Unfortunately, trade in Cork city was not as prosperous as across the water; however, he was sure they would be able to contribute something, showing their sympathy with the engineers . It was a matter the delegates should bring before their different societies at the earliest convenience, and if they did, he was confident it would have a good effect. In his trade at present, they were levying money in the effort to bring it to a standard that would keep their business above water, but he was confident they would come forward and subscribe in this matter.

Mr. Jones (carpenters) also spoke in favour of assisting the engineers and said he was sure Cork city would contribute proportionately with any other city in the United Kingdom. The President suggested a grant from the funds of the United Trades. This suggestion found favour, and, on the motion of Mr. Murphy (coopers), seconded by Mr. Harty (tailors), it was decided to subscribe £5 to the engineers. Mr. Murphy (engineers) thanked the Council for the manner in which the matter had been taken up.

The President stated that, in accordance with the resolution of the night before, he and Mr. Kiely had attended the

meeting of the Cork Board of Guardians that day and urged the adoption of the fair wage resolution. They had all seen in the "*Echo*" what had transpired. There was one gentleman whose actions towards the trades he would like to refer to: that was Mr. John Morrogh. He quipped that did not know if Mr. Morrogh knew what a tradesman was, or if he had gone through the mill with regard to the wages an unfortunate tradesman had to raise a family on, but he hoped he would not remain a guardian much longer, and that many like him would be relegated to oblivion (A Voice – "The capitalist again"). Yet he, and such men – he would call tyrants – sought to wipe out the trades of Cork with their rulings. At least, that was what to a certain extent Mr. Morrogh's action had tended towards that day.

Mr. H. L. Young, the Chairman of the Board, had said:

> *"There was not much of a grievance, but if they could assist the trades of Cork, they would do so".*

That was the class of people they were told to expect nothing from, but they had learned that this was the class from whom they would get more than those they were told to expect everything from. Having quoted Mr. Morrogh's remarks from the report in the previous day's "*Echo*," the President said Mr. Morrogh was one of those people who told them they had a right to support such movements as the Plan of Campaign to keep the evicted tenants in their homesteads; that they had a right to sacrifice everything in the interests of combination, as long as they had no voice against him. However, the moment such a voice was raised against him, he said such a combination as the trades of Cork city had no right to look for anything from an employer, but should accept whatever starvation wages an employer might deem fit. He quipped that he might tell Mr. Morrogh that they would attack right, left, and centre. For the past 20 years, these people had been talking a great deal with results they were all cognisant of. It was now the turn of the tradespeople, he claimed, to talk. They would show that they were alive; that they were not slaves, and that they required for themselves, and their families, a fair living.

Mr. Morrogh's actions, they claimed, would not commend themselves to any "right-minded" person. There was a principle in the matter which they prized, and they would not let anyone trample on it. Mr. Morrogh was in sympathy with the working people, but his actions showed he wanted them to work on sweating wages. It was hoped that he would take a lesson from the Board of Guardians of Belfast – to which he had referred – because there, the guardians not only adopted the fair wage resolution, but insisted that contractors recognise trade union rules . That was what had been done in the North, from which they were told to expect nothing. Mr. Morrogh had made a remark about milk contractors and dairymaids. There was a laugh at that. Well, perhaps, they would be requiring a smart man at Dan Lowry's, and he was just the type of man to suit (laughter). He had also spoken about the importation of sashes. Well, perhaps, he was affected by such matters, showing he cared little about the interests of others. He had also said that tradespeople were not ratepayers. They were as much ratepayers as Mr. Morrogh was. The "*Cork Examiner*," in an article on the preceding Saturday, had told them that every man who held a house was a ratepayer. But, of course, he humorously said that Mr. Morrogh considered himself smarter than the '*Cork Examiner*.'

Mr. Young was to be thanked for the action he had taken. No matter who an individual man was, it was said that when he showed he was anxious to assist working people, they would give him credit for honesty of intention. Mr. Young had proven that he would give more help to the trades than Mr. Morrogh, who professed to be in sympathy with the trades. He (the President) was glad to know they had friends in the press and in every board, irrespective of politics. Nationalist or Conservative, it was immaterial to them as long as they got their bread and butter. The Cork Trades Council was no longer divided. They would watch their own interests in the future and vote only for those – Nationalist or Conservative – who were willing to assist them, instead of hypocrites, who in public said they would give the trades everything, but behind their backs urged a starvation wage rule. If they were to have

Home Rule under such men as these, he strongly hoped that they would never get it.[51]

In December 1897, at a largely attended meeting of the Irish Land and Labour Association (ILLA) in Co. Cork, Mr. Kelleher, President of the Cork Trades Council, next addressed the meeting and stated that he had been deputed by the Council to attend and express their sympathy with the cause of the agricultural labourers. He referred to the grievances that the labourers had to endure and expressed the opinion that the only effective weapon in their hands was organisation. This was met with cheers.[52]

In 1898, a railway strike broke out in County Cork. On 3 February 1898, it was reported that Mr. J. Kelleher (President of the Trades Council) occupied the chair, at a crowded meeting, and amongst those present featured Alderman E. Crean, M.P., as well as Mr. R.J. Bell (General Secretary to the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants). The Chairman, in opening the proceedings, stated that from the action taken by them, they had believed there was a probability of a settlement being arrived at. However, they (the trades) had not been part of widening the breach, for they could see for themselves that it had been opened further since they had last met. He (the president) was very glad to see the suggestion of Alderman Roche for arbitration. Messrs. Tevenan and Bell had agreed to arbitration, but as far as he could find, the Board of Directors had declined arbitration. That was because the Directors had a bad cause, for in his (Mr. Kelleher's) opinion, there was an opportunity for immediate settlement if arbitration were agreed to.

The Trades Council of Cork, recognising the seriousness of the dispute, had decided at their last meeting to remain neutral for a time until everything possible had been done to arrive at an amicable settlement. The Council of the Trades communicated with Mr. Croker, who replied that the Directors would agree to see a deputation from the Trades.

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[51] *Cork Examiner 24/9/1897*

[52] *Cork Examiner 7/12/1897*

Accordingly, on Saturday last, Messrs. Kiely, O'Brien (the Secretary), and himself appeared before the Board of Directors. He (the President) thought that the interview required some explanation from him in light of the letter from Mr. Croker that had appeared in the papers, purporting to give the true facts of what took place in the boardroom.

What they (the deputation) said at the meeting was that they came there as peacemakers, as they recognised that it was their duty to take up that position in regard to the dispute. He impressed on the Board the advisability of interviewing the representatives of the men, as in the case of any trade or labour dispute, it was usual to have the representatives of the men to negotiate for the settlement of such disputes. He had explained to the Directors that Mr. Bell was the representative of the men in that dispute, and he requested that he should be admitted. But Mr. Croker was the whole Board, and not the Directors themselves. The High Sheriff, one of the directors, stated that the Directors highly appreciated the action of the Trades Council in appearing before them as peacemakers in the endeavour to arrive at an amicable settlement to the satisfaction of the Directors and the men.

The Directors said that they would be pleased to receive a deputation of their employees, but they could not agree to the representatives accompanying them. As they knew, that decision was conveyed by him to the representatives of the men, but the men refused to meet the Directors unless their representatives were allowed in. They returned to the Board-room at the appointed hour, but the three representatives of the Trades Council were not permitted to remain, nor did they receive Mr. Bell. He certainly said that that action was widening the breach, and he considered that Mr. Croker was largely responsible for it. The trades were compelled to withdraw from the room through Mr. Croker's intervention with the Directors. Mr. Croker told them that the Directors could not see anyone else outside their own employees.

He gave that explanation because of the allegedly misleading way in which Mr. Croker had described the interview in the paper. Members of the Cork Trades' Council, he asserted,

were not anxious for a continuance of the dispute; on the contrary, they still believed that there was a possibility of peace, but if the Directors of the Bandon Railway persisted in their present attitude, the inconvenience which would arise to the public would not be the fault of the men, who had agreed to arbitration, but which was declined and scouted by the Directors. They, as the Trades of Cork, deeply deplored that state of things, but if the Directors persisted as they were doing, the Trades would be bound to take the side of the men.

The Secretary to the Trades (Mr. O'Brien) then read a number of letters that had been received in response to invitations sent out to attend the meeting. Mr. C.J. Dunn, J.P., President of the Cork Incorporated Chamber of Commerce and Shipping, wrote:

> *"Many thanks for your kind invitation to the meeting. You will understand that as the Chamber of Commerce and Shipping has been in the position of mediator in the railway dispute, it would be unadvisable for me to attend the meeting."*

Mr. J. Lane, J.P., Vernon Mount, wrote as President of the Cork Literary and Scientific Society, saying that as his society existed solely for the purpose of promoting pursuits of a literary and scientific nature, it never took part in any subjects other than these or interfered in public affairs of any kind. Sir John Scott wrote:

> *"I am obliged for your courteous invitation to attend a meeting at the Assembly Rooms with reference to the very regrettable strikes of the men of the Cork and Bandon Railway, but a previous engagement will prevent me from being present. Meantime, I do hope that the wise counsel of the President of the Chamber of Commerce and Shipping will prevail, and that you may be able to announce to the meeting that the men have arranged to return to work."*

Mr. W.T. Green, H.C., also wrote regretting his inability to attend. Mr. Bell, who was warmly received, then addressed the meeting. He joined with the chairman in the regret that it was found necessary to call either a meeting of trades or

railwaymen in connection with the dispute. He had entertained hopes that by Saturday last the management of the Cork and Bandon Railway would have some inclination towards bringing the dispute to a termination. Following the correspondence that passed between the manager of the company and himself and the secretary of the Trades Council, negotiations between respectable citizens and the management had failed. That forced him to the conclusion that from the very commencement, from the time the harsh punishment was inflicted on Buckley, there was a determination on the part of the Directors to crush the combination of men on that railway at all costs and at all inconvenience to the public.

On the preceding Friday, it was claimed that Mr. Croker had obtained a communication from him, and instead of having the courtesy to reply to him personally, Mr. Croker forwarded the reply to a gentleman in the city, which reply was handed to him in the course of his address on a Monday evening. That showed him there was no desire on the part of the manager to have a settlement arrived at. Alderman Crean's remarks on Friday evening had the effect of bringing forward a few representative citizens to try and do something in the matter, and after some members of the Trades Council had succeeded in obtaining an interview, these citizens endeavoured to obtain another. Now, he was not particular by what means the dispute was settled, so long as it was settled on a fair basis, and with justice to those concerned. The interview with the Directors, it was asserted, was one of a very unsatisfactory character. Instead of dealing fairly with the situation and trying to offer the men something that was tangible—something that might aid in bringing the dispute to a close—there was produced a list of a number of offences alleged to have been committed by Buckley prior to the one he had just been reduced for. There were no dates, no particular charges specified—merely records of fines, cautions, etc. When the deputation from the Trades Council came out of the Board-room and conveyed that to him, he thought that if the company had such a list of previous offences, and if they were genuine ones, they would not be afraid to give the list either to the men themselves, the Press, or to the whole world. He asked one of the representatives to

return and kindly request a list of the offences, so far as they might be able to give them for consideration at a meeting, and if they came to the conclusion that the offences prior to the particular one justified the company in taking the action they adopted, he was satisfied the men would readily say, "Well, they were justified in doing what they did; we had better return to work."

The reply was, "We cannot give you anything." Buckley declared that he had never been fined in his life; that he had never received more than two or three warnings. Well, either Buckley was lying or Croker was lying. And it was only right that they should know who was lying. If Buckley was the liar, he would lose all sympathy, and if Croker was the liar, he also would lose all sympathy. He felt justified in asserting at that meeting that Croker was the liar. If Mr. Croker had the courtesy, or manners at any rate, to make those things known at the commencement of the dispute, it would have given the other party an opportunity of making out a case to the best advantage. If Croker had such a trump card up his sleeve, he would have played it at any rate. He (the speaker) was inclined to think that Croker was a very bad player if he kept that trump card up his sleeve, and lost the game by doing so.[53]

Later in February, a public demonstration was held in the City Park in connection with the strike on the Cork and Bandon Railway. It was organised by the United Trades Council and was of very large proportions. The proceedings were very orderly up to the closing period of the meeting, when a fight occurred on the grounds. The persons engaged in the contest were not known, but it was understood that one was a striker and the other a person who had taken the place of a man out. Owing to the influence of some outsiders, the men were separated without any material injury to either. Very few of the constabulary were on the grounds, but there was a large force outside and inside the precincts of Albert Quay terminus. Nothing, however, occurred that required the attention of the police, who were under Head-Constables Higgins and Smith.

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[53] *Cork Examiner 3/2/1898*

The representatives of the Trades had assembled at the Mechanical Hall in Grattan Street and in processional order marched to the scene of the meeting, the Workingmen's Band heading the members of the Trades Council. Then came the railway men, who were preceded by the Butter Exchange Band. The fife and drum bands of Fair Lane and Douglas brought up the rear. On passing the station-house on Albert Quay, there was some groaning. Under the direction of Mr. Joseph O'Brien, Secretary of Cork Trades Council, the meeting was well organised, and processional order duly recognised. Mr. Jeremiah Kelleher, President of the Trades Council, occupied the chair. A Working Men's music band was also present.

The Chairman, on coming forward, expressed his gratification at seeing such a vast gathering of the working men of Co. Cork assembling to give their sympathy and support to the railway men. It showed that it was not alone the railway men who were fighting that battle, but it was the entire body of working men of Co. Cork. At the beginning of the dispute, the Trades Council had remained neutral in the hope that an amicable settlement might be arrived at. The trades had never preached strikes or anything of a similar nature, but they had always held that peace was their maxim. He noted that it became their duty, however, as representatives of the working men, to stand by the railway men on that occasion, for the Bandon Railway directorate had refused all efforts at a settlement, and they were now ready to take up their gloves and meet them in the open. The question before them was not one of the error of Signalman Buckley alone, but it was a question of the tyrannical treatment meted out to the Bandon Railway men by their manager, Mr. Croker. He was glad to see that the men of the Cork and Bandon Railway had shown Mr. Croker and the directors of the railway that they would not submit to his conduct or that of his directorate. They had been told that paid agitators had been imported into the city to interfere with and ruin the commerce of the county, but the railway men and the public could put the proper value on those statements. Thank God, he exclaimed, the working men were now more alive to their interests than they had been, and

they were not going to be duped by the Bandon Railway or any other railway. It was not the intention of those gentlemen (Messrs Bell and Tevenan) to widen the breach between capital and labour, nor had the Trades Council any intention of doing so. On the contrary, they recognised that labour could not progress without capital, just as capital could not progress without labour. But when they were confronted with an employer who told them that they were not to have combination, they should stand resolute and fight him to the bitter end. He was glad to see the men had come there that day to show they would not be deterred by blackleg labour. In the old days of the Land League, they knew the treatment that was meted out to men such as those working on the Cork and Bandon Railway at present. A blackleg was the lowest scum on God's earth; he was more miserable than the creeping creation, and he was, as it were, a hired assassin, who would stab his fellow man in the back. A paper had tried its utmost to convince the working men of Cork, as well as the general public, that Mr. Bell and Mr. Tevenan were there to ruin the commerce of Ireland. Mr. Bell was a Welshman and Mr. Tevenan was an Irishman, and they were both there to relieve the men of the Cork and Bandon Railway from serfdom, and if they followed their advice—for they were men who were competent to give them advice— their emancipation was within reach. A paper, he said, that had stood by them was the "*Cork Examiner*". The speaker complained that the prominent citizens of Cork had not taken up the matter as warmly as they should. Some of them had, however, and he mentioned to them the names of Messrs. C.J. Dunn, Mr. Green, and last, but not least, Alderman Augustine Roche. But the directors had scouted the idea of having Alderman Roche or anyone else interfere with the discipline of their line. At this stage, Mr. Kelleher read a telegram from Alderman Roche from Cahirsiveen, regretting being unable to attend the meeting, and expressing deep sympathy with the men. The speaker, continuing, referred to the action of Alderman Roche in his efforts to bring about arbitration in the matter, and pointed out that the directors had positively declined to accept arbitration. They knew that Alderman Roche had very generously come forward and cheered the men on, and put his hand in his pocket and supported them. He asked the working men of

Cork to stand firm by the men of the Cork and Bandon Railway, and if they did, success would be theirs. Mr. Bell, General Secretary, said, in the course of his speech, that he was in Cork not with the view Mr. Croker and others had stated, not to cause a dispute but in the belief that he would come in contact with reasonable and sensible business men. He had, however, been deceived in the people he was going to meet, and found he was dealing not with reasonable and sensible business men but with the Cromwell of 1898. He presumed Irishmen were now celebrating '98; and Croker thought he would make himself prominent and make a name for himself as Cromwell II. Yet, he was very happy to recognise that Mr. Cromwell was dealing with a different class of men to his predecessor, and that he would not succeed in his mission. The men had fought so far reasonably. They had made overtures which had been refused, and there was nothing for the other side but to have the men submit to the tyranny of Croker, who had settled that dispute in his own opinion. They thought the directors would have told Mr. Croker that he had made a mistake, and that Buckley's punishment was out of proportion to the case. Mr. Payne-Shoares and his colleagues had, however, backed up Mr. Cromwell, and said, "Well done, my good fellow; you have done right." They thought the shareholders would condemn the action of their executive body, but they found the decision of the shareholders was that the directors had done right, that they should extract the blood from the workers, and as much money as they could. The chairman referred to arbitration as an absurdity, but they should remember that anything the chairman of a Board of Directors or the manager of a railway said was right, and that whatever anyone else said was an absurdity. They had a Free Labour Protection Association providing free labour. He had another and a proper name for the association— "The English Aristocratic Blackleg Supply Association", and in future they would have it christened as such. They had been able to see what that association could send to Cork from the “scum” of England, Scotland, and Wales. Men released from prison were coming there, and found employment; men discharged from their signal cabins for being drunk were there, and he warned the public that something was bound to happen whilst they entrusted the management of their lives to such

men. They had been informed that officials of the company were going to the houses of the men asking them to return to work. When, he asked, did they find a railway company standing drinks to the men?[54]

Another very large meeting of the railway men of Drimoleague, Knockbue, and Madore was held at Drimoleague, West Cork, in early March. Among those present included Mr. Joseph O'Brien, Secretary of the Cork Trades' Council, as well as local branch leaders of the railway unions.

On the motion of Mr. McCarthy, Mr. Crowley, draper, was unanimously moved to the chair. The Chairman said he felt, indeed, grateful to the men for the honour they had conferred on him in asking him to preside at the event that day. It was always his desire to further the cause of labour by every means in his power. He had watched carefully all that had occurred since the struggle commenced, and in his mind, the men were justified in their action and had, he was pleased to say, the sympathy of every honest-minded person at their back. There was no doubt, from what he knew of the men of this district, that they were fully determined to remain solid until their demand was granted, and he was sure they would not let the tyranny of the Bandon directorate crush the independent spirit of the workman in this memorable year of '98. He would now introduce Mr. O'Brien, Secretary of the Cork Trades' Council, to address them.

Mr. O'Brien, in an exhaustive speech, said that judging from the spirit of the men present, it needed no words from him to convince them that it was only by the loyal and determined action they had taken that their objective would be gained. Six weeks ago, they were forced by the tyranny of Mr. Croker to leave their work and, so to speak, travel a road they had never walked before. It was a plain, straight road to those with experience, such as their able officers, Messrs. Bell and Tevenan. Consequently, from practical experience, they advised the men not to be led onto any of the cross roads they would meet on their line of march. The cross roads he

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[54] *Cork Examiner 14/4/1898*

referred to were the misstatements that appeared in the press. All barriers had now been passed, and they stood masters of the situation with the flag of victory almost waving over their heads. There was but one small thread held by the directors' trickery keeping that victory from them. Therefore, if the men remained firm, their action would be the knife to cut that thread, and their objective would be gained.

He claimed that he had that day an opportunity to examine the quality of the company's present staff, and there was not one among them who would not remind one of what could be called a mantelpiece ornament. Now, after ten days of struggle, the company had declared all overtures at an end and stated they would fill the men's places with new hands. What had taken place since? All their efforts to fill those places had been futile. The man with the black bag and his companions, who tried to induce them to return with an increase of wages, were treated with scorn and contempt. Mr. O'Brien counselled those present not to accept any terms from the company unless they were on an honourable line, and that was that the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants must be recognised, and the men must be dealt with as a body of men, not as individuals. He asked them not to do anything rash, and to avoid getting into the clutches of the law, for there was no justice in this country for the workers. Let them act wisely and moderately and treat those blacklegs with scorn and contempt. Let them enjoy their welcome rest, stand true to each other, and the flag they had nailed to the mast would be lowered with the words "Victory for the labour cause" inscribed on its folds.

Mr. Michael Delany, of Cork city, next spoke and said, as a railway man himself, he could tell the men of the permanent way that their spirited and manly action in this struggle had won for them the respect and admiration of the railway men of the United Kingdom. He accused the public of not showing their sympathy in a proper manner, for they ought to support these men who, in the frost, snow, and rain, toiled on the road to enable them to travel and do their business. Often, the men of the permanent way had to walk three or four miles with their meals in their hands, and at meal hours, they had to warm their food with a withered bush. The

public thought nothing of this but left the men to fight their own battle. The society was standing by them; let them stick to it, and the hour of their triumph over tyrants was at hand. Mr. McCarthy, Secretary of the Branch, proposed the following resolution:

> *"That we, the railway men of Drimoleague, Knockbue, and Madore, avail of this opportunity to tender our sincere thanks to the traders of West Cork who are supporting us in this struggle, and in return for their kind support, to assist them as far as lies in our power; also, to renew our former resolutions in pledging ourselves to stand man to man until the honourable demand we struck for is conceded by the company."*

Mr. Bryan McSweeney seconded the resolution and said that nothing but the terms of that resolution would be accepted by the men of that district. Mr. John Heinegan, supported the resolution and said any services he could render to the men in their present struggle, which he believed to be a just one on their side, would be cheerfully given, and he would do all in his power to help them on to victory.

Mr. P.J. McCarthy also supported the resolution and endorsed all that had been said. He would also assist the men by every means in his power. The Chairman put the resolution, which was carried amidst cheers for the cause of labour. A warm vote of thanks to the Chairman brought the meeting to a close.

Leaving the rooms, the strikers escorted Messrs. O'Brien and Delany to the platform, but when they reached the gates, the porter and stationmaster prevented them from entering. They were about to force their way, when Mr. O'Brien advised them not to break the law, and they remained outside. As the train steamed out, they cheered the Cork city deputation.[55]

Not long later, another crowded meeting, organised by the local men on strike at the Cork and Bandon Railway, was held in the Town Hall, Bandon, on. The attendance included a very large number of local traders. The St Patrick's Brass

[55] *Cork Examiner 9/3/1898*

Band played to and from the meeting, and a good deal of enthusiasm was manifested. Addresses were delivered by Messrs P J Tevenan, Kelleher (President of the Cork Trades' Council), O'Brien (of the same body), and others. Mr C O'Regan, TC, was unanimously voted to the chair. Mr P J Tevenan, General Secretary of the ASRS in Ireland, was also in attendance.

The "Coalman," who was very cordially received, said the men were as determined now as they had ever been and had not flinched one inch. They were, indeed, willing to settle the dispute, but only upon the terms they had already made known. Mr Tevenan, who was enthusiastically received, said the men disclaimed all responsibility for the continuation of the strike, which would have been settled long ago if the directors had consented to arbitration by the impartial tribunal proposed. He was sorry to see that the clergy in some parts of the district had taken up an attitude against the men in this dispute. He would be the last man in the world to say a word of disparagement about the clergy of any denomination, but he would remind those clergymen who were using their influence against the men's organisation of what the late Cardinal Manning did in the London Dock Strike of 1889. Cardinal Manning took the side of the men in that strike, and he would not have done so if they had been in the wrong. Everybody knew the result of his noble efforts in that struggle, and when he died and his remains lay in state, it was a most touching sight to see the grief of those poor men—many of whom, perhaps, had never paid much attention to religion before or shown any interest or respect for any of its ministers. The speaker again referred to the alleged risk the public ran in travelling over the line. Mr D O'Brien proposed:

> *"That we, the railway men of the Bandon district, here assembled, return our sincere thanks to the traders of West Cork, and pledge ourselves to assist those who are now assisting us, and we renew our former resolution to remain true and united until a satisfactory settlement is effected between us and the Cork and Bandon directors."*

He was glad to say that a portion of the traders of the town had supported them from the start. As regards the second part of the resolution, the men would adhere to their stance to the last. Mr D Kelly, in seconding the resolution, referred to the inferior rate of wages on the line. Mr Kelleher (President of the Cork Trades Council) said he was there representing the labour of the city of Cork, which was solid in support of the men on strike (loud applause). It was hardly necessary for him to tell the men to hold together; they were certain to win.

Mr O'Brien (Cork Trades Council) also supported the resolution in a vigorous speech. He commended the Skibbereen Town Commissioners for their action with regard to the strike. The public had a great deal at stake in the strike, and it would be a terrible thing if the obstinacy of the directors in refusing to settle should damage the fishing industry of the South Coast . In seconding a vote of thanks to the chairman, Mr Tevenan warmly eulogised the action of Mr J McDaniel, J.P., Bandon, in endeavouring to settle the strike.[56]

The Irish evidence before the Royal Commission on the Licensing Laws was brought to a close in May. Among the witnesses was Mr. Joseph O'Brien, Secretary of the Cork Trades Council, who gave evidence strongly opposed to further restrictive legislation. He maintained that in this view, he expressed the opinion of the working men of Co. Cork. Mr. O'Brien believed that total Sunday closing and early Saturday night closing would lead to increased home drinking and the proliferation of bogus clubs. He was also strongly opposed to the extension of the bona fide traveller limit.[57]

In December 1898, ahead of the council elections to be held, Mr. Jeremiah Kelleher, President of the Cork Trades' Council, also supported the resolutions. As far as the British Labour Party was concerned, he claimed that they would

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[56] *Southern Star 19/3/1898*

[57] *Southern Star 28/5/1898*

never undermine the National movement. However, he urged them to put aside the petty political jealousies that had unfortunately arisen among them. He expressed pleasure at the selection of Mr. Frank Mahony as a candidate for the new County Councillorship, and said that Mr. Mahony was honoured and respected by every class of worker. Blarney and the big district around it would be ungrateful, he claimed, if they did not approve of Mr. Mahony's candidature. When such men came forward, they would be false to the traditions of the working classes and to the "National" sentiment if they did not support them.

Mr. Joseph O'Brien, Secretary of the Cork Trades' Council, also spoke in favour of Mr. Mahony's candidature. He said that Mr. Mahony and his firm had already done much for the village of Blarney, and particularly for the working classes, by whom Mr. Mahony was entitled to be supported. Mr. D. Kiely said that when they saw the parish priest and one of their employers among them that day, it showed that they took an interest in the work of the Association. With such a combination, success was assured. In the City of Cork, they had no such aid. The reverse was the case. It was said that workers had no right to come forward for positions that should be filled by wealthy people. He asked them to look at the city Corporation. For the past seven years, he claimed that it had been a large mass of jobbery and everything disreputable for such a class of men. There may have been a few exceptions, but they had been outvoted in anything they attempted to do. The resolution was then put to a vote and declared carried unanimously.

Mr. F. Mahony, who was received with loud applause, said he desired to express his thanks for the manner in which they had received his name that day. He wished he and the firm with which he was connected had been spared so much praise. They spoke too highly of them, though he might say that they (the Messrs. Mahony) had always done their best for the benefit of the people. He agreed with the previous speakers in reference to the question of Home Rule. He placed Home Rule absolutely at the forefront of everything because he believed that the Irish people had already been too long deprived of the right to manage their own affairs,

apart from the unsympathetic control and keeping of the English Government. He fully endorsed the resolution dealing with the fair wages clause. He was not in favour of exploiting the poor man, who was forced to work for low wages. It was also the duty of elected District Councillors, he claimed, to ensure that the man who did the work received a fair wage. He wished to repeat what he had said at the meeting on the previous Sunday, and that it was a healthy sign that they, representing the popular voice at a meeting for the selection of candidates, should invite the parish priest to preside over their political deliberations. He suggested that this would show the English Government that, if they disqualified the priest and insulted their religion, these people were not in sympathy with such conduct. Furthermore, if they could not elect the priest, they would, at the very least, bring him to their meetings to help them in their deliberations.[58]

Mr. J. J. Kelleher, President, occupied the chair at the meeting of the Cork Trades' Council in January 1899. The following trades were represented at the convening: tailors, plasterers, carpenters, stonecutters, painters, cabinetmakers, and boot and shoe operatives. A letter was read from Mr. Byrne, from the Cloghroe branch of the Irish Land and Labour Association, requesting a representative to attend the meeting to support the candidature of Mr. F. Mahony under the County Councils and to consider candidates for District Councillorships. It was decided that, since the day was convenient, none of the Trades would attend. The remaining business was conducted privately.[59]

James Connolly, who would later become world famous, visited Cork city immediately following the municipal election involving the original Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) in Belfast. The Cork city meeting occurred on February 14, 1899, at 21 Grattan Street, presided over by Mr. J. Jones, with the '*Cork Constitution*' noting a "fairly large" audience in attendance. His topic was 'Labour and the Irish

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[58] *Cork Examiner 19/12/1898*

[59] *Cork Examiner 7/1/1899*

Revolution.' Connolly asserted that the class that economically oppressed the Irish workers would never guide them to national triumph. He advised them to abandon this middle-class leadership, which signified "middle-class patriotism" and middle-class settlement. The Irish workers were tasked with imparting a more profound and moral meaning to patriotism, and through organisation, dismantling the system that subjected the populace to suffering.[60]

In February 1899, it was reported in the '*Evening Herald*' that Mr Joseph O'Brien had retired from the role of hon. Secretary of the Cork Trades Council after three years in the role. It was declared that he had performed the role with "marked ability."[61]

At the Cork Board of Guardians, in early August, Mr. Luke Philpott was elected to the position of plumber. Mr. John Murphy, of the Hibernian Wallpaper Depot, was declared the contractor for the repairing and painting of the Dispensary on Liberty Street, subject to enquiries being made by the Cork Trades' Council as to whether Mr. Murphy paid the standard rate of pay.[62]

The meeting of the Parliamentary Committee of the Irish Trades Congress, held in the Trades Hall, Capel Street, also in August, was well attended, with delegates present from Belfast, Limerick, Cork, and Dublin. In connection with the Workmen's Compensation Act, there was a lengthy discussion. The replies received from several government departments, relative to this matter and appointments under the Workshops Act, were considered to be evasive and unsatisfactory. The recent legislation in connection with the Agriculture and Industries Bill was also discussed, resulting in the appointment of a deputation to meet with the Chief

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[60] *Desmond-Graves, C (1971). 'The Life and Times of James Connolly.' International Publishers*

[61] *Evening Herald 25/2/1899*

[62] *Cork Examiner 4/8/1899*

Secretary and a number of Irish Members of Parliament to have the Dublin, Belfast, and Cork Trades Councils represented on the Industrial and Technical Education Board. The necessity for such representation, it claimed, was obvious, and the three Councils were urged to cooperate, and press the matter until they succeed in gaining the desired outcome. The committee also decided to issue an appeal for funds with a view to bringing the case of Leatham and Craig before the House of Lords. The question involved in the suit greatly affected the interests of workers, and the appeal was hoped to meet with a generous response. The next meeting of the committee was to be held in Dublin city, on a date not yet fixed.[63]

In October 1899, it was also reported that Cork Hairdressers had formed themselves into an association affiliated with the Cork Trades Council. However, hairdressers elsewhere in Ireland were still unsure whether they should be considered as tradesmen or not.[64]

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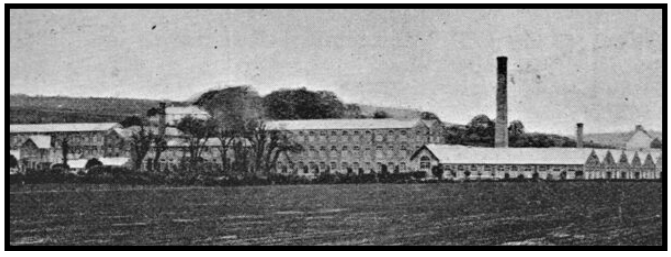
[63] *Evening Herald 12/8/1899*

[64] *Evening Echo 10/10/1899*



Mill workers, such as those in Blarney, were a focus for organisation by trade unionists. This is a photo of the Blarney Woollen Mills, sourced from the Blarney & District Historical Society.

A NEW MOVEMENT BECOMING, 1900-1905

In April 1900, Mr. Lane, then hon. secretary of the Cork Trades Council, addressed the Cork County Convention of the Irish Land and Labour League, after which a vote of thanks was passed to the convention's Chairman, and the proceedings ended.[65]

At a largely attended meeting of the Cork United Trades Council in July 1900, an invitation was read from the Organisation Committee to the President, requesting him to attend the forthcoming Nationalist demonstration in the city in support of the United Irish League. Mr. Cody opposed the acceptance of the invitation on the grounds that the organisation had repudiated the labour cause, and that at the next Municipal Elections, the labour representatives could not oppose members of that body if they associated themselves with it.

Alderman Kelleher said that some time ago, the association had unanimously decided that the President should represent them on the Unity Committee. He could not see for the life of him how they, by taking part in the broader National question, would depart from the path of trades unionism. If he thought that trade unionism would be tarnished by any National policy, he would be the first to put his foot on it, but they might as well try to stop the flow of the River Lee as to stop the spirit of nationality in the people. In the past, the trades of Cork were never afraid to stand on the National platform, and if any objectionable individual was there, they would not be bound by him. No one could say that this organisation was a bogus one. It had the hallmark of the Bishops and priests of Ireland, and surely no one would say that they were being led into a snare by the people of Ireland. He knew, he claimed, the strong Nationalist feelings of the trades of Cork, and they should assist in closing the breach. It would be all the better, and not the worse, for the

[65] *Skibbereen Eagle 21/4/1900*

cause of trades unionism if they could show their sympathy with the National cause, and when it came to a question of fighting for labour representation, they would have as much right to claim representation as the men who called themselves Nationalists. Therefore, he could not see for the life of him why the President should refuse to go and stand on the National platform. They should all acknowledge that the people were in favour of the movement, and they should be delighted to think that faction was dead. They should not be factionalised, and that the workers of Co. Cork were Nationalists to the heart's core. The cause of their country should be foremost in their hearts, and now, when the people were united, should they stand aside and say that they would not have unity?

He did not believe that the trades of Cork would for a moment entertain such an idea. He hoped that they would send their president to the meeting to declare in their name that the time had come when the people should unite and do what they could for the regeneration of their country. This was met with loud cheers. He moved that the president should accept the invitation. Mr. O'Leary seconded the proposition.

Mr. Cody did not wish to move an amendment, but he had expressed his honest views. He was proceeding to refer to some of the observations of Alderman Kelleher when the President ruled him out of order. The proposition of Alderman Kelleher was then put and carried unanimously with acclamation.[66]

At the August 1900 meeting of the Cork Trades' Council, significant attention was directed to the importation of furniture by a local public board. The Council would not discuss the merits of the dispute between the builders' labourers and their employers, but some slight reference was made to the matter. One of the delegates advised the labour members of the city Corporation to be careful when the discussion of the proposed by-law to prevent street preaching

[66] *Freemans Journal 20/7/1900*

came up, lest they should adopt a resolution that would later prevent them from holding meetings on the streets.[67]

In October 1900, an intriguing news editorial on parliamentary politics appeared in the '*Evening Herald*.' It noted that, as the electoral struggle had now practically concluded, the writer suggested that it might be profitable for readers to consider, for a moment, the extent to which the interests of the workers would be safeguarded in the Councils of the new Irish Party, through the accession of men who, from practical experience, understood the demands and aspirations of their class. It was remembered, the writer noted, that some time prior to the dissolution, attention had been directed to a speech by Mr. John E. Redmond and a letter from Mr. Davitt, in which both gentlemen expressed a desire that the organised forces of labour in Ireland should receive adequate representation in the new Parliament. The writer then posed the question: how had this desirable intention been borne out in the results?

The writer pointed out that, hitherto, the trade unionists across Ireland had been represented at Westminster, in one way or another, by Mr. Michael Austin, Mr. William Field, Mr. Eugene Crean, and Mr. Richard McGhee. Of these, Mr. Field (Dublin) and Mr. Crean (South-East Cork) had been re-elected; but Mr. Austin had failed to secure nomination at the West Limerick Convention, and Mr. McGhee had lost his seat for South Louth to Mr. Joseph Nolan. The writer suggested that their places in the Party had, however, been filled by the election of Mr. J. P. Nannetti for College Green, and Alderman Joyce for Limerick City. Thus, unless the intellectual capacity and qualifications of the latter gentlemen were to be compared with those of the former, the writer opined that the net gain for Irish labour interests in the new Parliament was—Nil!

The writer described the result as particularly disappointing for those who had felt that, after such strenuous efforts to establish branches of the League throughout the country, their work would surely be rewarded by the reversal, free of

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[67] *Skibbereen Eagle 25/8/1900*

all expense, of a few of the many safe seats vacated by the retirement of their former occupants. Instead, the writer lamented, not only had the construction which had been sought to be placed upon Mr. Redmond's speech and Mr. Davitt's letter been entirely falsified, but the very gentlemen who had now gone to London as Labour members for the first time had had to spend not a little of their own hard-earned cash in order to fight their way, under difficult circumstances, to the barren honour of a seat in Parliament, with an uncertain prospect of being maintained there.

Of course, the writer acknowledged, it might be said that the conventions had sole control of the selection of their own members; but the writer fancied that there was sufficient knowledge abroad on this point to lead many to the conclusion that the operations of some of these portentous assemblies had been "squared." The writer mentioned that Mr. Michael Austin's opinion on the Rathkeale Convention, which had thrown him out of the representation of West Limerick after a period of ten years of service, would, for instance, be especially interesting just now.

The writer then questioned whether this was, indeed, the total result of the presumed undertaking that labour would be adequately represented in the new Irish Party. Even the representative gentleman whose name had been sent forward by the Trades Council in conjunction with Mr. Nannetti's, and whose services had been gladly commandeered for the recent Park meeting, had been brushed aside as unworthy of consideration, apparently because, on more than one occasion, he had felt impelled to speak well of gentlemen against whom a war of extermination appeared to be at present directed. The writer opined that he, at all events, was not one of the "nondescripts" recently referred to by Mr. Harrington.

The writer concluded that the waning enthusiasm with which the labour representation pronouncements had been received in certain quarters, but which had ended in nothing, led to the conviction that another instance was placed on record of the gullibility of the workers at election times, when fine promises and flattering language held sway.

Notwithstanding, he said, that the president and some prominent members of the Cork Trades Council had been intimately associated with the United Irish League demonstration in the southern capital some time ago, the writer reminded the credit and intelligence of that council, as a body, that they had decided to stand neutral when they came to understand the position they would occupy in the recent election contest in that city. At the Dublin council, also, on the preceding Monday evening prior to its issue, the writer noted, the president, in supporting a resolution of congratulation to Mr. Nannetti, and urging the creation of a fund for his maintenance in Parliament, had taken occasion to renounce responsibility for the selection of the constituency to which he had been assigned and the contest to which he had been subjected. These matters, the writer emphasised, had been very properly kept outside Trades Council business.

In conclusion, the writer suggested that the interests of labour in the new Irish Party had not been adequately safeguarded, and the supposed promises of fairer representation for workers had not materialised as expected. The writer encouraged the workers to reflect on whether they had been misled, or whether this was merely the beginning of a longer, more challenging struggle for their rightful place in Irish politics.[68]

At a branch meeting of the Irish Land & Labour Association, held in March 1901, Mr. D. A. Kiely, a well-known former president of the Cork United Trades Association, addressed this large gathering. He expressed his satisfaction that the people of Bandon had rejected the actions of the Memorial Committee in importing a monument to commemorate men whom, he said, the community deeply loved and respected. Mr. Kiely remarked that, if for no other reason, he would have been pleased to attend simply to hear that repudiation publicly expressed.

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[68] *Evening Herald 13/10/1900*

He noted that the artisans felt considerable resentment over the decision to award the memorial contract to a country which, he claimed, had never shown affection or loyalty towards those being honoured. Turning to broader issues, Mr. Kiely urged the importance of organisation among workers for their mutual benefit. He assured attendees that they would continue to receive the strong support of the Cork Trades Council. He emphasised that securing proper representation on District Councils was a matter of urgency and needed immediate attention.

Mr. Kiely further commented on conditions he had observed during his journey from Cork earlier that day. He reported seeing very few labourers' dwellings along the route but a notable number of idle mills. He recalled that during a previous visit to Skibbereen, he had noticed the opposite — many labourers' homes and relatively few abandoned mills — and suggested that this contrast merited consideration in discussions about local development and workers' welfare.[69]

It was reported in the '*Evening Herald*' that the 1901 Irish Trades Union Congress, the delegates, by unanimous agreement, decided to accept the invitation extended by the Cork Trades Council to hold the following year's Congress in Cork City. Alderman Cave and Alderman Kelleher, who served respectively as President and Secretary of the Cork Trades Council, explained that their reason for encouraging the Congress to return to Cork city was the opportunity it would provide for delegates to visit the upcoming Irish International Exhibition. They pointed out that the Exhibition would showcase the progress made in Irish industry since 1882, when the last such event had been held in the city.

The writer of the article observed that this initiative was typical of the thoughtfulness of the Co. Cork tradesmen, and expressed confidence that few, if any, trade or labour unions across Ireland would fail to show their appreciation. The article suggested that unions should endeavour to take prompt steps to secure effective representation at the next

[69] *Cork Examiner 25/3/1901*

trades Congress, highlighting that delegates would not only be attending the Congress itself but would also have the chance to assess the progress of national industry as demonstrated at the Exhibition.

However, the article also noted, in the spirit of fairness, that a letter had been read during the Sligo Congress from the secretary of the Dundalk Trade and Labour Association. In the letter, the Dundalk representative asked whether it would be possible to consider Dundalk as the venue for the next annual event. He assured the delegates that, should they decide in Dundalk's favour, there would be willing workers ready to ensure the success of the Congress, just as had been hoped for the current gathering.[70]

At the half-yearly meeting of the Cork United Trades Council, the outgoing President, Alderman Cave, the '*Evening Herald*' reported, was unanimously re-elected. Mr. George Cales was appointed Vice-President, Mr. Patrick Creedon was re-elected as Treasurer, and Alderman Kelleher continued as Secretary. The writer commented that these appointments were excellent, noting that each official had been tested, was trusted, and could be relied upon to foster and promote the interests of the Trades Council.

The article reported that an attempt had recently been made to introduce a more radical brand of socialism into the Council, but that this initiative had not yet succeeded. The writer opined that there was little common ground between socialism, as it had been presented, and conventional trade unionism. It was suggested that the interests of the working classes would not properly be served by communism, whereas they had much to gain through conventional, Victorian trade unionism. The cautious writer concluded by expressing the view that the Cork Trades Union Council had demonstrated considerable wisdom in curbing the more radical socialist movement before it had the chance to gain ground.[71]

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[70] *Evening Herald 1/6/1901*

[71] *Evening Herald 20/7/1901*

In November 1901, at a Cork city meeting of the United Irish League, the committee's hon. Secretary, Mr. Michael Murphy, solicitor, noted that he had written to the Cork Trades Council, as directed by the committee, and received the following reply:

> *"Dear Sir.*
>
> *In reply to your letter on 7th inst, I am directed to inform you that the final arrangements have been made regarding the position of the (British) Labour Party at the forthcoming municipal elections.*
>
> *Yours truly,*
> *J. Kelleher, Hon. Sec"*[72]

In August 1901, a critique of the Cork Trades' Council in the radical '*The Workers' Republic*' newspaper, appeared. As an example—in the article's opinion—of the oligarchical power which labour "leaders" were said to wield over their supposed dupes among the rank and file, recent events at the Trades Council in Cork stood out prominently. A dispute had arisen between the gas-workers and their "home-made capitalist" employers, leading first to a strike and then to a lock-out. In response, a committee of labour representatives was formed to collect subscriptions and otherwise assist the gas-workers and their families during this period of hardship. "Comrade O'Lyhane" of this branch was elected Secretary of the Committee. The article argued that this was due to his consistent advocacy for the class interests of workers during his tenure on the Trades Council. Moreover, it claimed he had earned the animosity of the self-styled "pillars of the labour movement" in Cork by strongly opposing the so-called "broad national" questions favoured by mainstream labour leaders. According to the article, this enmity grew even stronger as "Comrade O'Lyhane" used every available opportunity—at public meetings and elsewhere—to promote socialism as the ideology that workers should adopt to emancipate themselves from capitalist domination and its by-products: strikes and lock-outs. In the article's view, removing

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[72] *Cork Examiner 14/11/1901*

such a dangerous and vigilant critic became the chief objective of these "pillars." Legal methods being unavailable or ineffective, the article suggested that underhanded tactics were resorted to instead.

When the time came for electing new officers of the Cork Trades Council, Mr. C. O'Lyhane was nominated for one of the positions. However, Councillor J. Lane allegedly opposed his candidacy on the grounds that the Shop Assistants' Union —which O'Lyhane represented—had not paid its affiliation fee, and was therefore ineligible under the rules. Subsequently, Alderman J. Kelleher (the Council's Secretary) refused to accept the nomination, stating that the Council would first have to investigate whether the Shop Assistants' Union was a bona fide organisation. The article questioned the sincerity of this sudden scrutiny. It pointed out that the Shop Assistants' Union had been affiliated for ten months and that Council representatives had attended their public meetings and lectures. Given this background, the article asked: was it not curious that the union's bona fides had never been questioned until now?[73]

Another article from that publication in August 1901 opened with a sarcastic proclamation: "A Labour Magistrate—yes, even a Labour Magistrate! Oh, prophetic soul!" The article sarcastically celebrated the elevation of the redoubtable Jerry Lane, T.C., who, as it was stated in a previous issue, had moved from working at the bench to sitting on one—on the magistrates' bench, that is. The article accused Lane of turning his back on the workers, suggesting he now wished to stand on them, rather than stand with them. The piece mockingly called upon the slums to rejoice—for while the lash had previously been applied by the open hirelings of the master class, it was now to be laid on by one nominated by the Cork Trades Council itself.

According to the article, this development was foreseeable to anyone observing Lane's behaviour on the Cork Exhibition Committee. He allegedly made himself conspicuous for his toadying to the high and mighty. One cited example involved

[73] *The Workers' Republic 1/8/1901*

Lane beseeching the Earl of Bandon to ask his wife, the Countess of Bandon, to form and preside over the Committee. The article interpreted this as nothing less than a calculated act of sycophancy—Lane, it claimed, had his eye all along on the role of magistrate, which the Earl, as Lord Lieutenant of Cork, had the power to grant. The piece described it as a "disgusting exhibition of lickspittleism."

It was commonly believed in Cork city, the article alleged, that Lane sought nomination to the magistracy. The transformation—from a representative of workers to one sitting in judgement over them—was, in the article's view, emblematic of the betrayal at the heart of the British Labour leadership. The editorial railed against what it saw as the hollow posturing of the British Labour Party, calling it a "gigantic humbug" that no longer represented the workers' interests. Evidence of this disillusionment, it argued, could be seen in the overwhelming attendance at weekly Socialist lectures, where hundreds were reportedly turned away for lack of space.

The Socialist Republicans of Cork, the article insisted, would not be fooled. It predicted that these "Labour fakirs" would soon face accountability, as the searchlight of Socialist criticism was now directed at their inner sanctums. The piece coldly warned them: those who crossed the Irish Socialist Republican Party (I.S.R.P.) would meet the metaphorical "buzz-saw" of its activism and critique.

In a direct appeal, the article called on all honest Trade Unionists to join what it described as the "only fighting working-class party in Ireland." It stated:

> *"We fear not the enmity of the masters or their henchmen—the labour fakirs. Comrades, onwards!"*

The article ended with a scathing condemnation of the city Corporation itself. In a final flourish, it criticised the body for passing a resolution of condolence to Mrs McKinley and the American people following the assassination of President McKinley. The Corporation had, in the same breath, condemned Socialism and Anarchism as incompatible with

liberty and incitements to crime. The article's author found this laughable. It singled out Mr. Horgan—who had proposed the resolution—as an example of political ignorance, claiming he knew "as much about Socialism or Anarchism as a pig does about an inside pocket." He was held up by this publication as a "type" of the sentimental but hollow political humbug.[74]

By April 1902, a "serious strike" was underway in Cork, at the bacon factory of Messrs. Lunham Brothers. At Blarney, 62 workers were on strike, and although strong efforts at mediation had been made, every indication suggested that a settlement remained very distant. At the weekly meeting of the Cork Trades Council, reference was made to the strike involving the pork butchers at Lunham's factory. The Trades Council agreed to appoint a deputation to meet with Messrs. Lunham in an attempt to reach an amicable settlement if possible. It was also reported that several men had arrived from Dundalk to replace some of the striking workers.[75]

The ninth Irish Trades Union Congress opened in Cork city in May 1902, under the presidency of Mr. McManus, chairman of the Parliamentary Committee. The delegates were welcomed by the Lord Mayor, the City High Sheriff, and the chairman of the Harbour Board. Alderman Cave, president of the Cork Trades Council, was elected president of the Congress. In his address, he emphasised the great value of technical education as a means of improving the condition of the Irish industrial population. Several resolutions were passed, and the Congress adjourned until the following morning.[76]

At the event, Mr. W. Waters, P.L.G. (Belfast), presented the report of the Standing Orders Committee. The report stated that Mr. Stewart, representing the Shop Assistants' Union in Dublin, had appeared before the Committee and requested

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[74] *The Workers' Republic 3/8/1901*

[75] *Irish Daily Independent 18/4/1902*

[76] *Belfast Newsletter 20/5/1902*

that the credentials of the delegates from the Cork Trades Council be rejected, on the grounds that they had refused to accept the affiliation of the Cork city branch of the Shop Assistants' Union. The Committee, however, decided that they had no jurisdiction over the matter, and therefore took no action.[77]

In June 1903, the following trades were represented at a meeting of the Cork United Trades' Association: tailors, coachmakers, painters, carpenters, builders' labourers, horse farriers, Harbour Board employees, bookbinders, machine-rulers, stone-cutters, bakers, typographical workers, and boot and shoe operatives.

Mr. McCarthy (stone-cutters) raised a question regarding the Free Library, asking why work on it had not yet commenced. The President replied that he only knew what he had read in the newspapers. Mr. McCarthy pointed out that a statement had appeared a fortnight earlier claiming that everything would be ready to begin work the following Monday. Alderman Kelleher stated that he had raised the issue at the last Corporation meeting and that, beyond the information given there, he had no further details. He added that during the meeting of the city Corporation's Law and Finance Committee, it was mentioned that issues regarding sureties had arisen.

Mr. McCarthy argued that workmen should not be left waiting while the question of sureties was resolved, and urged the Corporation to appoint the next best contractor available and proceed with the work. The matter then dropped. The Chairman also referred to the Irish Trades Congress, which he, along with other Cork delegates, had attended. He described it as one of the most successful congresses he had ever experienced.

He reported that a resolution from the Cork Trades Council concerning the ongoing Taff Vale case was unanimously adopted by the Congress. Additionally, the Congress passed a resolution in favour of using Irish-made stone for paving

[77] *Evening Herald 20/5/1902*

streets in cities like Belfast, Cork, and Dublin.

In this connection, he noted with satisfaction that Belfast labour members had secured a contract with a local company, the Newry Granite Co., instead of sending orders to Wales, placing an order at home for 6,000 tons of setts. He expressed hope that if a similar opportunity arose, Cork city would follow the same practice. Mr. McCarthy, another delegate to the Congress, endorsed the Chairman's remarks.[78]

Mr. George Coates, chairman, presided at the usual meeting of the Cork United Trades Association in October 1903. Representatives of the following trades were present: tailors, painters, cork-builders, builders' labourers, farriers, boot and shoe operatives, Coombes employees, upholsterers, machine and stereotype assistants, typographical workers, bakers, mechanics, bookbinders and machine rulers, gas workers, coopers, and coachmakers.

The hon. secretary read a letter he had received from the Workmen's National Housing Council. The letter noted that Mr. Wyndham had stated, in reply to a communication from the Cork Association, that he was prepared to do something for the better housing of the working people both in town and country. The Council in England expressed satisfaction that the Cork Trades Council had taken up the matter and offered their assistance should it be required. On the motion of Mr. Kiely, it was agreed that the communication be entered into the minutes, and the secretary was directed to reply, thanking the Workmen's National Housing Council for their kind offer.

The chairman referred to the fact that a sum of £500 would soon accrue to the Corporation as a result of commons land falling into their possession. He suggested to Rev. Father Dowling that this sum could be appropriately devoted to the benefit of the workingmen by applying it towards the principal and interest on a loan for the purpose of erecting a technical school in Cork. He reminded the meeting that Mr.

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[78] *Cork Examiner 13/6/1903*

Carnegie had stated recently in the city that he was prepared to assist corporate bodies financially in establishing libraries, technical schools, art galleries, and similar institutions if they made an effort to initiate such projects themselves. The chairman expressed confidence that if the Corporation succeeded in raising £10,000, Mr. Carnegie would match it, resulting in a splendid technical school for Cork city.

Mr. D. Kiely, while supportive of the chairman's proposal, cautioned against embarking on too many initiatives simultaneously. He stressed that the council had already made a strong start on the project of improving housing for the working classes and should focus on that objective for the time being. He welcomed the warm support the press had shown for their cause and referred to a recent article in the '*Evening Echo*' which advocated co-operation between urban workers and agricultural labourers.

Mr. Kiely also observed that since its inception, the association had sought to assist agricultural labourers in their efforts for reform, noting that much of the congestion in the city stemmed from rural workers migrating to Cork city, and taking employment that might otherwise go to city labourers, thereby depressing wages.

Mr. Kiely also cited the City Engineer's evidence during the Extension Enquiry, stating that around 1,400 houses had been demolished during his term of office. When asked if any arrangements had been made to accommodate the displaced residents, Mr. Cutler had replied that they had been sent to Curtin's Lane. This, Mr. Kiely argued, demonstrated the urgent need for a proper housing reform in Cork city. He estimated that demolishing 1,400 houses would have displaced approximately between 5,000 and 6,000 people, worsening overcrowding in an already unhealthy environment.

Mr. Cody also spoke, supporting the chairman's remarks and expressing hope that Alderman Kelleher's motion on the housing issue would receive strong support at the upcoming Corporation meeting. Alderman Kelleher agreed that while the idea of a technical school was excellent, their immediate

focus should be on securing healthy homes for the working classes. He argued that efforts should first be directed towards social reform in housing, with technical training initiatives pursued later.

Mr. P. Lynch, T.C., concurred, stating that the technical school should be left in abeyance until the housing question was resolved. He criticised the unsanitary conditions in some congested areas and noted that prosecutions against negligent landlords were too infrequent. He stressed the need to tackle overcrowding urgently and called on city workers to unite in addressing this serious grievance. The chairman clarified that he had not lost sight of the housing issue when mentioning the technical school proposal.

He agreed that several lanes and back-streets in Cork city were in a disgraceful, insanitary condition, especially pointing out Patrick's Lane and Broad Lane. Mr. Coodes asked whether the Corporation had the power to close unsanitary houses or compel owners to make necessary repairs. The chairman and Alderman Kelleher confirmed that they did. A member interjected humorously, noting that many property owners were themselves city Corporation members, prompting laughter and cries of "Hear, hear."

Mr. Egan referred to the High Sheriff's evidence at the Extension Enquiry, expressing hope that the High Sheriff would attend the Corporation meeting the following day, when Alderman Kelleher's housing motion would be discussed. He urged the workingmen of Cork city to observe the Corporation's proceedings carefully and to remember the voting behaviour of their representatives at the next election.

Mr. Cody drew attention to the attacks on the Labour Party taking place at the present Extension Enquiry. He argued that the enquiry was little more than a veiled attack on Labour representatives and called for a formal protest. He contended that a timely protest would be far more effective than any criticisms made after the fact. Mr. Cody stressed that the Labour/Trade Union members had provided excellent service on the Council and deserved to be defended.

Alderman Kelleher suggested that any decision on the matter of protest be deferred until a special delegate meeting following the close of the enquiry. Mr. Kiely pointed out that opposition to the Labour members came largely from opponents of the housing scheme itself, and proposed that members familiar with the history of the housing issue should consider giving evidence at the enquiry. Mr. Curtin, Mr. Lynch, and the chairman all agreed with Mr. Cody's proposal. After further discussion, no action was taken.[79]

At an April 1904 of the Council of the Cork United Trades' Association, held on Thursday night, Mr George Coates (President) occupied the chair. The following trades were represented: tailors, painters, coachmakers, upholsterers, coopers, stonecutters, Corporation employees, bakers, gas workers, pork butchers, mill sawyers, builders' labourers, iron moulders, boot and shoe operatives, shop assistants, united carmen and storemen, coal porters, and general quay labourers.

The President said that at the meeting held the previous week, the Shop Assistants' Association had sent delegates seeking affiliation with the Trades Council. He was happy to report that the committee had reviewed the rules of the Shop Assistants, and likewise, the Shop Assistants had reviewed the rules of the Trades Council. Both parties were satisfied, and the Shop Assistants had formally joined the Association. He hoped that the Shop Assistants, for their own sake and for that of the Trades Association, would cooperate fully with the other societies and strengthen the hands of the workers in Cork city.

Mr Murphy (Shop Assistants) thanked the members for readmitting their body into affiliation. Now that they were back, he hoped they would work together better than during the previous occasion and that the Shop Assistants would do their utmost to assist the other workers. The President said:

> *"I would ask you by all means in your power to try to promote Irish manufacture wherever you can."*

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[79] *Cork Examiner 23/10/1903*

Mr Murphy assured him that, as far as his society was concerned, they would do everything possible to forward Irish manufacture.

The President then referred to reports in the newspapers during the week, stating that Mr Redmond and his party had crossed over to London after the Convention to vote on the Trades Union Dispute Bill. This Bill sought to restore to trades unions the right they had held since 1870, to peacefully picket any shop where a strike was taking place. Mr Redmond, after the last Congress, had received their Parliamentary Committee and had faithfully promised to stand by the Bill. The actions of the Irish Parliamentary Party confirmed that they had supported the trades unions throughout England, Ireland, and Scotland, and their efforts had resulted in the Bill passing its second reading.

Mr Egan (Vice-President) remarked that it was a great thing for the Irish Parliamentary Party to cross over to London under such circumstances to support a measure so important for the workers of the United Kingdom. He said it would be somewhat remiss of them not to thank the Party for what they had done. He moved that the secretary be instructed to write to Mr Redmond on behalf of the Cork Trades Council, and expressing their thanks for the unanimous support the Irish members gave to the Bill. The motion was adopted unanimously.

Mr Murphy (President of the Tailors' Society) brought forward a grievance concerning a dispute with Messrs. Dennehy and Sims, Patrick Street. Some seven years ago, Mr Dennehy opened his tailoring business on Patrick Street and engaged with the officers of the Tailors' Society. An agreement was reached that all orders taken would be made on the premises by society men only. Later, Mr Dennehy established a factory. The Tailors' Society had no objection to factories provided they confined themselves to factory work—that is, ready-made clothing—but when they took custom orders and completed them in the factory, the Society resolved to resist this by every legitimate means. Furthermore, Mr Dennehy opened a branch known as the

"West End" in Great George's Street. The Tailors' Society, concerned by this development, appointed a deputation to negotiate with Mr Dennehy, seeking an agreement that society men would be employed at the West End branch. Mr Dennehy refused outright. As a result, their members at Mr Dennehy's premises went out on strike. They remained willing to reach a settlement, provided it could be on honourable terms.

Mr P. Lynch, T.C., and Mr P. O'Sullivan (both tailors) also spoke. The latter stated that during discussions, Mr Dennehy had boasted that public opinion would oppose the tailors, alleging they were trying to destroy a local industry. This was, in his view, untrue: the tailors had no objection to the factory provided only legitimate factory work—ready-made clothing —was conducted there.

Moreover, the current system, he claimed, was unjust both to the tailors and to other traders in the city. The President said he was glad the tailors had made their statement, as the grievance was significant. Once the matter was made public, he believed the people would side with the tailors against Mr Dennehy.[80]

At the 1904 Irish Trades Union Congress, held in the Town Hall, Kilkenny, Messrs. G. Coates and M. Egan were listed as delegates from the Cork Trades Council.[81]

In July 1904, the '*Evening Echo*' reported that, at a meeting of the Cork Trades Council, statements were made regarding a recent article published by the newspaper about the Corporation clothing contract, prompting the editorial team to respond. The secretary of the local Tailors' Society alleged that in the article, the newspaper had sought to expose his trade to "the grossest ridicule" and had described its members as "a most inconsistent lot of knaves."

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[80] *Cork Examiner 30/4/1904*

[81] *Kilkenny People 28/5/1904*

The newspaper emphatically denied these accusations, asserting that it had never intended such a portrayal, and it argued that the article in question could not reasonably bear the interpretation that Mr. Lynch had placed upon it. The newspaper clarified that its primary goal had been to offer friendly advice to the representatives of the Tailors' Society regarding their stance on the clothing contract. Specifically, it had wished to point out that their opposition to a local factory, in this isolated instance, seemed unjust, especially considering the large volumes of ready-made clothing imported into the city every year without objection from the trades. Furthermore, it had noted that the same firm had secured a similar contract in England without interference from the trade societies there.

The newspaper said that Mr. Lynch later claimed, in contradiction to the newspaper's statement, that his society had indeed denounced the importation of ready-made clothing, but that the local press had failed to publicise this. In response, the newspaper expressed its interest in learning when these denunciations had been made at public meetings, as it had always regarded the encouragement of local industries as a matter of particular importance to its readers. Provided that such denunciations were not solely aimed at an isolated firm, the newspaper suggested that it was highly likely it would have given them due attention.[82]

In August 1904, it was reported that efforts to resolve the ongoing dispute between Messrs. Cash and Co. Ltd. and their employees were made, but that they were unsuccessful. Mr. O'Lehane and Mr. Macpherson, representatives of the Irish Drapers' Assistants' B. and P. Association and the National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, had an appointment with the directors of the company. After a lengthy discussion, the directors stated that they would not consider reinstating Mr. O'Dwyer. It was remembered that the labour strike had been initiated after Mr. O'Dwyer's reinstatement was refused. Therefore, the result of the meeting was that the situation remained unchanged.

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[82] *Evening Echo 18/7/1904*

Due to inclement weather, the usual parade of the assistants on strike had to be postponed in the early part of the day. However, it resumed later in the afternoon, once the had rain stopped. In the evening, around 7:30 p.m., the general body of drapers' assistants joined, bringing the total number of people marching through the streets after business hours to approximately 120. The constabulary increased their patrol in the vicinity of Messrs. O'Neill's establishment on Patrick Street, but no incidents occurred. In addition to the parade and the distribution of handbills, the striking workers used other means of advertising, such as cart advertisements and sandwich boards, to garner public sympathy for their cause.

Sympathetic remarks were also made about the assistants' cause at the weekly meeting of the Cork Trades' Council. A largely attended meeting of the Defence Committee was also held later in the evening. While the proceedings were private, a communication was subsequently issued to the press, stating that the committee had discussed a detailed report from Mr. O'Lehane and Mr. Macpherson regarding their meeting with the firm. Mr. Crowley, president of the Clonmel branch of the Irish Printer's Association, attended the meeting and demonstrated his support by making a generous donation to the Defence Fund. The committee also discussed the possibility of organising athletic matches to raise additional funds, and it was decided to advertise the dispute in various drapery centres, urging assistants not to intervene. A substantial amount of money had been raised.[83]

In October 1904, it was reported that the Right Honourable Sir Charles Dilke, M.P., addressed a significant working-class meeting in the Assembly Rooms, Cork city. The meeting was organised under the auspices of the Shop Assistants' Union, the Cork Trades Council, and the Parliamentary Committee of the Irish Trades Congress. Sir Charles' address focused particularly on labour issues affecting trade unionists in Ireland. Given that the right honourable baronet was expected to be a member of the forthcoming Liberal Government, his speech was of great importance to the workers in Cork city. The event attracted a large crowd to the

[83] *Cork Examiner 26/8/1904*

Assembly Rooms. The third annual report of the Irish Drapers' Assistants' Benefit and Protective Association also presented a satisfactory, though not exceptional, record of continued progress, which the organisation's officials were congratulated for. The report revealed that 780 new members were enrolled in the past twelve months, and the association's funds had grown from £1,259 to £1,712, despite £1,098 being paid out in benefits to sick and unemployed members.

The report also highlighted the success of the Cork city dispute, but emphasised that the true value of the organisation was not just in the victories it achieved or the disputes it resolved, but in the "moral force" it exerted within the trade. It noted that this moral force, though unseen and immeasurable, was often preventive or passive in nature. The organisation itself was viewed as the true strength, with the statement, "The Organisation and the Organisation is it," underscoring its pivotal role.[84]

In January 1905, Mr. Jeremiah J. Cronin of Macroom, who was regarded as the father of the Town Tenants' Movement, penned a letter to the '*Irish Independent*' newspaper in which he strongly supported the claims of town tenants. He argued that, more than the farming classes, the prosperity of the country depended on the town tenants. He believed that progress and prosperity could not be achieved until their grievances were addressed. In his detailed letter, he quoted from a correspondence by Canon O'Mahony to demonstrate that the Canon, too, had likely considered the Town Tenants' Question when he stated that the Land Question was obstructing progress and hindering "other greatly needed reforms from receiving more than the faintest attention."

Mr. Cronin also referred to a speech by the President of the Cork Trades Council, which discussed the emigration of labourers, as well as another speech by Canon Murphy, D.D., who argued that the Town Tenants' Question was of equal significance to the Land Question. Mr. Cronin went further in his assertions, stating that the Town Tenants' Question was

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[84] *Evening Herald 22/10/1904*

even more far-reaching in its impact on Ireland's progress and population than the Land Question itself.

He emphasised the importance of employment in keeping labourers in the country, and advocated for long leases, similar to those that helped make Belfast the thriving city it became. According to Mr. Cronin:

> *"One of those Belfast factories gave more employment than a whole parish of farmers could give."*

He believed that town tenants were more likely to engage in industrial work than farmers. Mr. Cronin insisted that security of tenure and the compulsory power to acquire land for factories or other beneficial public buildings were the two essential needs. He called for a united demand to secure these changes.[85]

In August 1905, it was reported that Mr. M. Egan, on behalf of the Cork Trades' Council, was invited to the ancient Cork city civic ceremony of "throwing the dart" with the Lord Mayor.[86]

As per '*A History of the Irish Working Class*,' labour journals had been brought out by the Cork Trades Council and Dublin Trades Council around this time.[87]

[85] *Irish Independent 3/1/1905*

[86] *Freemans Journal 23/8/1905*

[87] *Ellis, P (1985). A History of the Irish Working Class. Pluto Press*

Twelve Pages One Penny.

THE WORKERS'

Republic

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CORKLETS.

A Labour Magistrate! Yea! Even a Labour Magistrate! Oh! My prophetic soul! The redoubtable Jerry Lane T. C., who as we stated in last issue had designs on the bench, has caused himself to be nominated by the Cork Trades' Council for the Magistracy. Formerly it was his wont to work at the "bench," now he wants to sit on the "Beach"—and on the workers.

Come forth, therefore, ye workers from your slums, and jubliate! for up to the present the lash has been applied by the avowed hirelings of the master class, but now you will enjoy the ecstacy of having the whip laid on by the nominee of the Trades' Council!

This development on the part of this notorious fakir could have been clearly foreshadowed by anyone observing his manœuvres on the Cork Exhibition Committee, in which he made himself conspicuous by his exhibition of genuine home-made toadyism to the high and mighty ones on the aforesaid Committee. A Lady's Committee was to be formed, when our own Jerry besought his most exalted Lordship, the Earl of Bandon, to condescend to ask his gracious wife the Countess of Bandon to form the Committee and become its President.

There now for you! Bandon is Lord Lieutenant of the County Cork, and as such has the power of conferring the J. P. -ship; Jerry had his eye all along on this much coveted honour, hence this disgusting exhibition of lickspittlism.

It is common property in Cork, that the Labour Party is a gigantic humbug: the workers see this, as is evidenced by the enormous attendances at the weekly Socialist lectures now being conducted by the local comrades.

So great has been the demand for seating accomodation that the Cork Branch will be compelled to get larger premises, as at present hundreds of workers anxious to be enlightened on the great truths of Socialism have to be refused admission.

The Socialist Republicans of Cork will give a good account of themselves. Let labour fakirs beware, for now the searchlight of Socialist criticism is directed into their nests in many dark corners. and woe be to him who runs against the buzz-saw of the I. S. R. P.

Let all honest Trade Unionists join the Party, the only fighting working-class Party in Ireland. We fear not the enmity of the masters or their henchmen the labour fakirs. Comrades! Onwards?

In Cork's own town are the devil's own people! But the Corporation fairly takes the biscuit. In the fulness of their hearts the Corporation passed a resolution of condolence with Mrs. Mc Kinley and the American people, denounced the act of the cowardly assassin, and condemned Socialism and Anarchism as incompatible with true liberty and incentives to crime and murder. There now for you?

The resolution was proposed by a Mr. Horgan who knows as much about Socialism (or Anarchism for that matter) as a pig does about an inside pocket. Councillor Horgan is a type of the "gradh mo chroidhe" political humbug, who

An issue of the radical and confrontational '*The Workers' Republic*' paper, discussing the matter of Cork politics in 1901.

RISING WITH THE SMOKE, 1906-1910

In March 1906, the National Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks held their Annual General Meeting (AGM) in the Council Chamber of the Municipal Buildings, Cork City. Mr. E.W. Stewart, the union's Irish organiser, delivered a talk on 'Shop Life in the Great Cities - its Progress and Development.' Among the guest speakers included Messrs. Walter Hudson MP (from Newcastle-upon-Tyne), M. Egan (President, Cork Trades Council), and P. Lynch (Hon. Secretary, Cork Trades Council). The meeting was open to both men and women.[88]

After the death of the Irish republican leader, land reform activist, Michael Davitt MP, the Cork Trades Council, with Mr. Egan presiding on a night that June, was, like meetings of other organisations, also adjourned, following a resolution proposed by Mr. O'Gorman and seconded by Mr. Murphy.[89]

In February 1907, at a largely attended meeting on the topic of opening a temperance hall in Cork City, including the aim to honour Fr. Mathew, Mr. Murphy, vice-president of the Cork Trades Council, spoke in support of such a resolution, stating that the hall had filled a long-felt need in the city. He urged the young men who were already members of the society to encourage their friends to join, thus becoming organisers in the broader temperance movement. On behalf of the working men of the city, he expressed gratitude to the Capuchin Fathers for making the advantages of such a magnificent hall available to them.[90]

In June 1907, at a meeting of the Cork United Trades, Mr. Michael Murphy, president, presided over the meeting, which was attended by representatives from various trades,

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[88] *Evening Echo 5/3/1906*

[89] *Sunday Independent 3/6/1906*

[90] *Cork Examiner 1/2/1907*

including tailors, bakers, coach-makers, builders' labourers, carpenters, coopers, plumbers, railway staff, engineers, typographers, cabinetmakers, polishers, upholsterers, mechanics, lunatic asylum attendants, painters, organ builders, Irish drapers, carmen, storemen, farriers, brewery workers, masons, and amalgamated shop assistants.

The President addressed the recent actions of the Home Secretary regarding the Kynoch Cordite Works at Arklow. He stated that the expressed intention of the Government to interfere with this vital industry, on which the town of Arklow heavily depended, had caused considerable concern among all sections of society in County Wicklow. He stressed that it was appropriate for the Cork Trades Council to voice their opinion on the matter and urged that everything possible should be done by those with influence in the Government to preserve the industry. He expressed relief upon hearing that the situation seemed to be heading toward a favourable resolution, as a deputation representing the people of Arklow was scheduled to meet with Mr. Haldane. The President warned that the loss of employment for the men engaged in the industry would have severe consequences, including an increase in the number of labourers in the city seeking work, potential overcrowding in the workhouse, or a rise in emigration. He recommended that a resolution be passed, urging the Irish Party to press the Government to ensure the industry's survival. The resolution proposed by the President was adopted, following a motion by Mr. O'Callaghan, vice-president, and seconded by Mr. O'Gorman.

The Hon. Secretary read a letter from Mr. Corrigan, Secretary of the Builders' Labourers' Society, which was unanimously agreed to be recorded in the minutes. The letter read:

> "*Sir,*
>
> *At a general meeting of the above society, held on Sunday, 11th June, it was unanimously passed: 'That we congratulate Alderman Kelleher and Mr. Michael Egan on being appointed to the commission of the peace for this city. This appointment demonstrates that the Trade and Labour bodies are recognised*

by the current Government. We are also proud to say that they could not have made a better selection for their invaluable services to the Labour cause. We hope they may continue to serve the workers with fair and just leadership for many years to come.'"[91]

As of early September 1907, Mr. Murphy, then President of the Cork Trades Council, was a committee member of the Cork Technical Instruction Committee of the Cork Corporation.[92]

On the topic of the parliamentary boundary revision in Cork, the Revising Barrister, Mr. R. S. Walsh, resumed the revision of the South Ward lists during late September 1907, in the Council Chamber of City Hall, but the proceedings were comprised of the usual character. Mr. J. J. Mooney, solicitor, attended on behalf of the Cork Trades Council and requested the Revising Barrister to set a date for the hearing of objections to claims lodged in their interest. The Revising Barrister responded that he would make an arrangement soon, in line with Mr. Mooney's request. The Court was then adjourned.[93]

At the end of September, a very large meeting of railway servants was held in the Mechanics' Hall, Grattan Street, to hear an address by Mr. J. H. Bell, J.P., President of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. Mr. P. Murphy, President of the Cork Trades Council, presided, and the hall was filled to overflowing. Letters of apology were received from Captain Donelan, M.P., and Mr. M. J. Nagle, Chairman of the South of Ireland Cattle Trade Association.

The Chairman stated that if a strike occurred, they would have the sympathy and support, both moral and financial, of every Trades Unionist in the United Kingdom. Mr. C. Dunworth, President of the Cork Branch, then proposed a

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[91] *Evening Echo 14/6/1907*

[92] *Evening Echo 9/9/1907*

[93] *Cork Examiner 26/9/1907*

resolution in favour of the movement. Mr. Michael O'Connor, Tralee, seconded the resolution and shared the following message with the meeting:

> *"Kerry are solid behind the Executive Committee and Mr. Bell in the movement."*

Mr. Bell then addressed the meeting and was most enthusiastically received. He stated that he believed in the great and equitable principle of an eight-hour workday for all, and emphasised that there was plenty of money available within the companies to employ all workers on better terms and to provide employment for the unemployed. Alderman Kelleher, J.P., Messrs. A. Rodie, M.P., and P. Lynch, Secretary of the Trades Council, spoke in support of the resolution, which was carried unanimously.[94]

In November 1907, at a board meeting of the Cork & District Lunatic Asylum, a deputation from the Cork Trades Council appeared before the Board regarding grievances that attendants at the Lunatic Asylum were allegedly experiencing.

Mr. P. Murphy, President of the Cork Trades Council, explained that they had been asked to appear on behalf of the attendants, who were members of the Trade and Labour Association. He highlighted the attendants' long working hours, which typically began at around half-past six in the morning and extended until eight, nine, or even ten at night. He argued that these extended hours were excessive, particularly given the challenging working conditions and the atmosphere in which the attendants were required to work in their course of employment. Mr. Murphy suggested that a reduction in working hours would improve the attendants' ability to perform their job duties more satisfactorily for the Governors of the institution. He clarified that the Trades Council did not intend to interfere with the institution's discipline but believed that the position of the attendants should be carefully considered. Additionally, he urged the Board to allow married attendants to return home to their

[94] *Freemans Journal 30/9/1907*

families on at least one night per week, stressing that this would be a natural and humane gesture.

Mr. P. Lynch, Hon. Secretary of the Trades Council, expressed his agreement with Mr. Murphy's points and added his own concerns. He raised the issue of how the medical supervision system operated when an attendant was suspected of being drunk. As a member of a public board, Mr. Lynch clarified that he did not seek any relaxation of the institution's discipline that might lead to disorder. However, he felt the current system required reform. He explained that an attendant might go to town after a long day's work and, like any other person, might have a drink. If, upon returning to the institution, the gate porter suspected the attendant had been drinking, even if only based on a faint smell of alcohol, the matter would be reported to the Medical Superintendent. In such cases, the attendant could be subjected to a ridiculous process of proving sobriety, which Mr. Lynch described as childish. He shared the concern that attendants might be asked to perform tasks like reciting difficult phrases or standing on one leg to demonstrate their sobriety. He called for a reassessment of this procedure, as it was considered degrading by the deputation.

The Chairman assured the deputation that the committee would give full consideration to the matters raised and the issues were referred to the House Committee for further review.[95]

At the close of December 1907, it was reported that, His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, leaving Cork city, was met at the platform of the Great Southern and Western Railway Terminus by a deputation from the Cork Stonecutters' Society, who wished to discuss the contract for the Haulbowline Dockyard. The members of the deputation expressed their deep concern for the welfare of Ireland and voiced their desire that the work on the Haulbowline extension be postponed until the originally specified local limestone could be used, rather than the substitution of foreign granite. The President of the Cork Trades Council

[95] *Skibbereen Eagle 23/11/1907*

highlighted the widespread disappointment felt at the potential export of work from the country, which would, they believed, have a negative impact on local industry.

In his reply, His Excellency expressed his appreciation for the tribute and assured the deputation of his sincere desire to help in any way he could for the country's welfare. However, he explained that once a contract had been signed, it was extremely difficult to make changes. He regretted the disappointment and mentioned that since the reception of the resolution from the Chamber of Commerce, he had personally looked into the matter. However, he also noted that the obstacle of the signed contract was, in his view, a serious issue, and the Admiralty had considered granite to be the best material for a dockyard, leaving the contractor to decide where to source the material.

One member of the deputation clarified that granite was not specified in the contract and that Irish limestone was indeed stronger.

His Excellency responded that he understood the concern and added that it was well known that the Co. Cork workers were diligent and hardworking. He assured the deputation that both he and his Excellency were committed to promoting the development of Irish industries. However, in this particular matter, he emphasised that they would understand his position. He also mentioned that in any future projects, the views of organisations like the one represented by the deputation would be thoroughly considered, and appropriate precautions would be taken.[96]

In June 1908, a meeting of the Cork Trades Council was chaired by Mr. P. Murphy, P.L.G., and attended by representatives from various trades and unions, including bakers, tailors, railway servants, fire brigade members, carpenters, Irish drapers, plumbers, coach-makers, typographers, and many others. A letter from the secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Operative House and Ship Painters was read, appointing delegates to the council.

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[96] *Freemans Journal 31/12/1907*

The President took a moment to discuss the re-election of Mr. James Long as Chairman of the Cork Harbour Board for a seventh consecutive term, praising him as one of the few public figures in the city held in such high esteem. He expressed confidence that with Mr. Long at the helm, working-class representatives would continue to be treated courteously, and if more individuals like him were in leadership, many of the grievances of the working class could be resolved. The President also mentioned the illness of Mr. P. Lynch, the council's secretary, and conveyed the collective hope that he would recover soon and return to the council. The remaining business was conducted in the absence of the press.[97]

In July 1908, the Cork Trades Council has passed a resolution adopting the Irish Union label of the Cork Typographical Association, and urging that all printing required for the Council should bear that union's unique imprint. Mr. MacManns, Organiser of the Typographical Society, spoke on the necessity of using bona fide trade union labour for printing work in Ireland. Additionally, it was decided to communicate with the Postmaster-General regarding the positions of boys in the telegraph service, whose roles were affected by recent limitations.[98]

In August 1908, at a meeting of the Cork Trades Council, held one evening, and presided over by Mr. Patrick Murphy, P.L.G., the following trade and labour bodies were also represented: Bakers, Tailors, Typographical, Painters, Masons and Paviours, Millsawyers, Carpenters, Lunatic Asylum Attendants, Bread Van Drivers, Pork Butchers, Gaeworkers, Dock Labourers, Carmen and Storemen, Cabinetmakers, Upholsterers and Polishers, Railway Servants (Nos. 1, 2, and 3 branches), Brewery Workers, Builders' Labourers, Boot and Shoe Operatives, Iron Moulders, Carters' Society, Coopers, Coal Porters and Quay Labourers, Amalgamated Shop Assistants, Irish Drapers, Farriers,

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[97] *Evening Echo 26/6/1908*

[98] *Irish Independent 13/7/1908*

Engineers, Hairdressers, and Barbers. The Secretary pro tempore, Mr. R. Cody, read the following letter:

> *"**Secretary's Office, City Hall,***
> ***5th August, 1908.***
> ***Patrick Lynch, Esq,***
> ***Secretary, Cork Trades Council.***
>
> *Dear Sir,*
>
> *I am directed to inform you that the Corporation has undertaken to organise a conference of local public bodies to discuss the best means to take advantage of the recent changes in the Patent Laws. The goal is to encourage foreign manufacturers to establish factories for patent production in Cork and its vicinity. I am requesting that your body appoint delegates to attend this conference on your behalf. The conference will be held on Tuesday, 1st September, at one o'clock, in the City Hall, Cork. Mr. T. W. Russell, M.P., Vice-President of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, has kindly agreed to attend, recognising the importance of the conference's objective. Please send the names and addresses of your delegates at your earliest convenience.*
>
> *Yours faithfully,*
> *D. F. Giltinan, Secretary of Committees, etc."*

The President highlighted that the conference aimed at facilitating and encouraging the establishment of industries was one of the most crucial initiatives taken in recent times. He stated that the local public bodies were fulfilling their duty by coming together to create employment for the many idle workers in Cork. He emphasised the importance of these bodies forming a permanent board dedicated to advancing industrial development in the region. Cork, he pointed out, was in a desperate state, but there was ample money and talent available if everyone worked together to help lift the city to a higher level of prosperity and happiness.

The President then requested the names of the delegates to attend the conference. On the proposition of Mr. Michael

Egan, J.P., seconded by Mr. McCarthy (Pork Butchers), the following four officers were selected to represent the council: Messrs Patrick Murphy, P.L.G., Charles Bunworth, John Horgan (Plumbers), and Patrick Lynch, T.C.

The President also mentioned the upcoming visit of Mr. Will Thorne, M.P., General Secretary of the Gasworkers and General Labourers' Union of Great Britain and Ireland. He strongly urged the workers of Co. Cork to attend the demonstration and meeting scheduled for his visit. After discussing some important business, the meeting was adjourned.[99]

In October 1908, at the meeting of the Cork Trades Council, Mr. Patrick Murphy, President, chaired the session, with representation from various trade and labour bodies, including Bakers, Tailors, Railway Servants (Nos. 1, 2, and 3 branches), Coachmakers, Builders' Labourers, Farriers, Pork Butchers, Masons, Woodcutting Machinists, Gasworkers, Brewery Workers, Engineers, Carpenters, Painters, Carmen, Carters, Storemen, Irish Drapers, Shop Assistants, Warehousemen, Clerks, Dock Labourers, Lunatic Asylum Attendants, Typographical Workers, Coal Porters, General Quay Labourers, Bread Van Drivers, Hairdressers and Barbers, Furnishing Trades, Fire Brigade Union, Iron Moulders, and Boot and Shoe Operatives.

The President remarked that the present was an opportune moment to encourage delegates to support Irish-manufactured personal wear and local products. He explained that there was nothing unreasonable in asking people to spend their money on home-grown goods. By supporting local industries, they would be creating more employment in their own country. This policy of buying Irish had always been advocated by the Council, and though some may have neglected it in the past, it was not too late to make a concerted effort to support native industries. He recalled a few months prior, when they had discussed foreign trade in the city, and called on them again to encourage those

[99] *Evening Echo 7/8/1908*

businesses that closed their doors at reasonable hours and supported their workers.

Mr. Cashman, representing Cabinetmakers, echoed the President's sentiments, expressing hope that, for his trade, local products would be supported. Mr. Kiely also expressed his approval, stating that Irish-made goods were as good as, and often cheaper than, imported goods. He encouraged everyone present to back their own people moving forward.

Mr. O'Lehane, of the Irish Drapers' Association and President of the Dublin Trades Council, expressed his pleasure in being at the meeting and relayed fraternal greetings from the trades unionists of Dublin. He emphasised the longstanding bond of solidarity between Cork and Dublin unions and hoped it would strengthen in the future. He noted that while some delegates might be focused solely on Ireland, his own goals were firmly national, and he believed their movement should grow to become one of the greatest forces in the country. Mr. O'Lehane praised the support for Irish manufacture at the meeting and thanked the President for his assistance to the Drapers' Union in the City Hall proceedings which had occurred the previous night. He stressed the importance of supporting employers who treated their workers well and not giving business to foreign competitors who undercut fair trade. The President reciprocated Mr. O'Lehane's sentiments, and his comments were supported by Mr. Kiely. The remainder of the meeting was routine.[100]

In February 1909, the British Labour Party had decided not to put forward a candidate for the forthcoming city council election. However, in the event of a vacancy for a Councillor, Mr. P. Murphy, President of the Cork Trades' Council, had announced his intention to stand for the position. The '*Skibbereen Eagle*' highlighted that Mr. Murphy had been a well-known figure in the public eye for a considerable amount of time, and he was widely recognised for his fairness and moderation in all matters. His experience and balanced

[100] *Cork Examiner 24/10/1908*

approach, the newspaper opined, would make him a valuable addition to the Corporation.[101]

In 1908, the famed trade unionist James Larkin headed to Cork City, at James Sexton's behest (The England-based Sexton was a leading figure in the National Union of Dock Labourers). The dockers' organisation thrived there; nevertheless, when a quarrel arose in early November 1908, Sexton withdrew support from the new branch. Larkin was allegedly subjected to more burdensome constraints from headquarters; despite his clear dedication, he had been denied authorisation to travel to Cork city on two occasions.

Following the secession of the IT&GWU, both Larkin and Sexton necessitated more extensive rationalisations for their conduct; however, in Sexton's instance, these justifications seem to have been predicated on an altered perception of the practical circumstances. As recently as May 1908, the annual report of the NUDL commended the significant growth of the organisation throughout Ireland, and by year's end, with the establishment of a major branch in Cork city and considerable advancements in other locations such as Waterford, this status was not only preserved but enhanced. In 1908, the NUDL had a rise in membership and financial enhancement, hence rendering Sexton's perception of reckless Irish actions jeopardising the more prudent mainland factions of the organisation incorrect. Nevertheless, it was to become the foundation for his ideological campaign that strengthened the Irish focus inside the IT&GWU.[102]

In April 1909, Mr. Murphy, P.L.G., President, occupied the chair of a meeting of the Cork United Trades and Labour Council, and the following trade and labour bodies were represented: Bakers, tailors, railway servants (Nos. 1, 2, and 3 branches), typographical, plumbers, Postmen's Federation, Fire Brigade Union, furnishing trades, plasterers, brush-makers, Tramwaymen's Union, coachmakers, woodworking

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[101] Skibbereen Eagle 27/2/1909

[102] Gray, J (1984). 'City in Revolt : James Larkin and the Belfast Dock Strike of 1907.' Blackstaff Press

machinists, boot and shoe operatives, builders' labourers, brewery workers, Irish ring support workers, gas workers, Corporation employees, boiler makers, iron moulders, bread van drivers, hairdressers and Barbers' Union, Lunatic Asylum attendants, shop and warehouse porters, carpenters, masons, seamen and firemen, Irish drapers, amalgamated shop assistants, engineers, farriers, Glen workers, part-bathers, mechanics, painters, carmen and storemen, and coal carriers. The Secretary then read the following letter:

> ***"Oaklodge, Douglas Road.***
>
> *Dear Mr. Lynch, On behalf of my family and myself, I would like to convey to the Cork Trades Council our sincere thanks for the vote of condolence passed to us in our great sorrow. I also wish to express our gratitude to yourself for your sympathetic references.*
>
> *— Faithfully yours, George Barrett."*

On the motion of Mr. Cody, seconded by Mr. Cotter, it was ordered that the letter be inserted in the minutes.

A letter was read from the Hon. Secretary of the committee formed for the purpose of raising a fund for the family of the late Mr. C.G. Doran, stating that a public meeting would be held in the County Council Chamber at the Courthouse. The committee would be very glad to have the cooperation of the Trades Council in this matter, as the object was one which should appeal to all Irish Nationalists, irrespective of political opinions. Mr. Murphy, the President, had kindly promised to attend, and the committee would also be very glad if as many other members of the Trades Council as possible could attend the meeting.

The President said that very few words were necessary to commend the services of such an excellent and able gentleman as the late Mr. Doran to the workers of Cork, because Mr. Doran had always been a friend to them. He was sure that the different bodies would do their duty at the meeting and show their practical sympathy with the family of the late Mr. Doran. He was confident that as many members

as possible would attend the meeting and do all in their power to make the testimonial successful. This was agreed to.[103]

In late April, at a meeting of the Cork Typographical Society, a resolution was unanimously adopted denouncing the action of the Cork Trades Council in lending itself to political intrigue during the present election. The Society believed that, in the absence of a Labour candidate, such actions were inconsistent with the fundamental rules of the Trades Associations and were unlikely to serve the best interests of the labour movement in Cork city. The resolution called upon the members of other organisations to repudiate the right of the Cork Trades Council to commit organised bodies to any candidate in these circumstances. It expressed a hope that they would assert their freedom and self-respect by voting for whomever they pleased.[104]

At an April 1909 meeting of the Cork Trades Council, a new resolution was unanimously passed by the Cork Typographical Society, which had condemned the Council's political involvement during the current election. The resolution argued that, in the absence of a Labour candidate, supporting any political figure was inconsistent with the fundamental rules of trades associations and unlikely to benefit the labour movement in Cork city. It called on members of other organisations to reject the right of the Cork Trades Council to commit union bodies to any candidate in such circumstances, urging them to assert their freedom and self-respect by voting for whomever they pleased.

The meeting, presided over by Mr. P. Murphy, included representatives from various unions, such as bakers, railway workers, engineers, and many more. A significant portion of the discussion centred around the ongoing tramway strike in the city. Several members, including Mr. Madden, suggested that the Conciliation Board should intervene to resolve the

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[103] *Evening Echo 2/4/1909*

[104] *Freemans Journal 28/4/1909*

dispute. While no one, he said, had glorified the strike, there was a shared desire for a settlement, as the strike had caused considerable inconvenience for both workers and employers. Mr. Madden expressed his frustration with the involvement of Mr. Maurice Healy, a solicitor associated with the tramway company, accusing him of not supporting workers' interests.

The debate became more heated as Mr. O'Carroll and others argued that the Trades Council should remain neutral in political matters. They believed the union's primary purpose was to serve the labour movement, not engage in political struggles. There were interruptions, with some members defending the decision to support Mr. Healy. Despite the divisions, the Council voted to back Mr. Healy for the upcoming election, a decision that sparked more protests from those who felt the Council was straying from its intended purpose. The meeting ended in disorder, with members expressing frustration over the political stance taken by the Council.

Ultimately, the meeting revealed deep divisions within the Cork Trades Council regarding its involvement in politics. Some members pushed for political neutrality, while others believed that supporting certain candidates was necessary to advance the interests of workers. The contentious discussions highlighted the challenges unions faced when navigating political affiliations, especially when there was no clear Labour candidate to support.[105]

At the 1909 Irish Trades Union Congress, Cork city Councillor Mr. M. Egan, President, occupied the chair. Mr. P. Murphy, P.L.G., of Cork, proposed a resolution expressing alarm at the actions of the Minister of War and the Postmaster General in replacing civilian labour with military labour in the South of Ireland. He argued that this move was depriving hundreds of Irish workers of employment in their own country and contributing to the growing ranks of the unemployed. He called upon the Parliamentary Committee to immediately bring this issue to the attention of the Labour

[105] *Cork Examiner 30/4/1909*

Party and the Irish members of Parliament, with the goal of prompting a debate in the House of Commons and applying maximum pressure on the responsible ministers to reverse the order.

Mr. Murphy stressed the importance of the Congress and Irish MPs taking decisive action, citing complaints from Cork workers who, due to the situation, were being forced to seek employment in England. Councillor Lynch of Cork seconded the motion, noting that the Cork Trades Council had already protested against the Minister of War's attempt to displace civilian workers by assigning tasks to the Royal Engineers. He also pointed out that the Postmaster General had similarly tried to replace civilian staff at the Cork General Post Office - an act which, he claimed, would not be tolerated in England. The resolution was carried unanimously, and it was agreed that copies would be sent to both the leader and members of the Irish Parliamentary Party.[106]

One hundred and forty quay labourers, along with sixty carmen and loaders employed by the Cork Steam Packet Company, went out on strike at different times in early June 1909, creating what the press regarded as a serious situation. Investigations revealed that the strike was sparked by the employment of three quay labourers who were members of an English union, rather than the Irish Transport Union. Their presence was objected to by many of their fellow workers, who promptly downed tools in protest. In solidarity, the sixty carmen and loaders also left their posts.

The striking workers gathered and paraded along Penrose Quay outside the Steam Packet Company's premises. However, the atmosphere remained relatively calm and free of serious incident. Later, a meeting was held involving the workers and several of their supporters, including Rev. Father O'Leary, C.C., of St. Patrick's; Mr. James Larkin, President of the Dublin Trades Council; the President of the Cork Trades Council; and Mr. Harris. The dispute was discussed in full, but no immediate resolution or hope of settlement

[106] *Cork Examiner 2/6/1909*

emerged. Multiple efforts were made to resolve the conflict, but all proved unsuccessful.

In the meantime, several clerks employed by the company, along with the three members of the Dockers' Union and six men from the Irish Transport & General Workers' Union (IT&GWU) who had not joined the strike, proceeded to load cargo onto the '*Inniscarra*.' A considerable amount of cattle and stock was also loaded onto the ship by the owners themselves. A few minor scuffles occurred during the day, but they had little relevance to the main dispute.

The '*Inniscarra*' ship departed from her moorings around eight o'clock the previous night, having taken aboard her full cargo. During the evening, police arrested a man named Mr. Price, who was reportedly drunk and using obscene language; the arrest was made to prevent any escalation into more serious disorder. Shortly after the '*Inniscarra*' put to sea, picketing ceased, and the quay returned to its usual quiet nighttime state. Most of the police officers who had been on duty throughout the day were also withdrawn afterwards.[107]

A mass meeting of labourers, held in relation to an ongoing strike of building labourers, took place in the City Hall in July 1909. Mr. P. Murphy, President of the Cork Trades Council, presided over the gathering and expressed deep regret over the crisis affecting the city. He stated that the workers wanted to clarify their position to the public: they had outlined their terms and were willing to return to work. If they were not allowed to do so, responsibility for the continued disruption would lie squarely with the employers. The men acknowledged that they had made a mistake, and the least they expected in return was to be reinstated and permitted to work in harmony going forward.

Alderman Kelleher spoke next, stressing that the workers were not seeking to disrupt trade and commerce in Cork City. He emphasised the seriousness of the situation, stating that the men had no desire to inflame tensions or commit regrettable acts. They were ready to work, and he urged the

[107] *Cork Examiner 15/6/1909*

employers to abandon their current stance. He also appealed to the workers to maintain peace, avoid drinking, and remain calm, as their cause was a just one.

Mr. James Larkin addressed the audience, and refuted several accusations made against him, declaring them false. He insisted that he did not wish to prolong the strike, as he was in favour of peace. However, he criticised the employers' approach, describing it as vindictive. He urged the workers to stand united in their struggle and not allow a single man to be victimised. Though he disavowed violence, he added that if he ever advocated it, he would accept his share of responsibility. Larkin framed the struggle as one for a sacred principle—union solidarity—and assured the workers that if they remained true to one another, they would succeed.

Mr. M. Egan, J.P., also spoke, and appealed to the employers to state the conditions under which they would accept the men back. Only then, he said, could the workers consider if an agreement could be reached. If no resolution came soon, he warned, no one could predict what might happen.[108]

In late August 1909, in response to the Cork Corporation's proposal to send a deputation to the directors of the Great Southern and Western Railway Company, with the aim of advocating for the reinstatement of employees recently involved in a strike in Cork city, Sir William Goulding wrote to the Town Clerk stating that receiving such a deputation would serve no useful purpose at present. He explained that all positions within the Company had already been filled. At a meeting of the Cork Trades Council, the Chairman, Mr. Murphy, expressed hope that the Railway Company would refrain from victimising the workers, especially given the fact that there was an urgent need for employment in the area.[109]

In September, the Cork Trades Council held an extensive discussion on the supposed destitution caused by the closure of the docks at Passage. Mr. O'Mahony reported that the

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[108] *Freemans Journal 3/7/1909*

[109] *Irish Independent 21/8/1909*

Admiralty, in a letter to Mr. Crean, had refused to provide work to anyone outside of Government-owned yards. In light of this, Mr. O'Mahony proposed that the Trades Union Council should request Mr. Crean, Captain Donelan, and the city's parliamentary representatives to urge the existing Government to provide employment for additional tradesmen at the Haulbowline docks. Mr. O'Gorman, representing the Carpenters, expressed his hope that immediate steps would be taken to reopen the Passage docks. Several other delegates also supported the views of Mr. O'Mahony and Mr. O'Gorman. When putting the motion to a vote, the President, Mr. McNamara, added that the President of the Board of Trade should be asked to implement the provisions of the Labour Exchanges Act without delay, rather than waiting until the following January. The motion was carried.[110]

At a convention of the County Cork branches of the Irish Land and Labour Association in Cork City Hall, Mr. Eugene Crean, M.P., who was received with a rather enthusiastic applause, began his address by congratulating the Chairman of the proceedings and the labourers of Co. Cork on the impressive turnout at the meeting. He explained that he had come at the request of the secretary of the Newcestown Branch, and also emphasised that his longstanding record with the labour movement in Co. Cork spoke for itself. He reminded the audience that over twenty years ago, when the famed Michael Davitt came to Co. Cork to establish the old Democratic Labour Organisation, he, as President of the Cork Trades Council, supported the effort. Crean praised the workers of Co. Cork for securing the leadership of a journalist as reputable as Mr. D.D. Sheehan, and noted that Sheehan had resigned the Chairmanship in a gesture of conciliation, to ensure no faction had grounds to remain outside the organisation. Despite this, he said, it was clear that the opposition was not seeking reconciliation, but rather aiming to force Sheehan out of Mid-Cork, a move that Mr. Crean strongly condemned. He criticised those who dismissed the Land and Labour Association as a nebulous entity, arguing instead that the bodies he saw before him were

[110] *Irish Independent 11/9/1909*

concrete and formidable. Crean strongly supported the principle of organisation, saying that under his leadership as President of the Cork Trades Council, he had fought to include unskilled workers in the union, believing they were just as in need of protection as their skilled counterparts. He decried the tendency for those who had not contributed to the struggle to benefit equally from the victories won by organised labour.

Crean stated his full support for the resolutions passed at the meeting, asserting that the workers did not need permission from any quarter of society to participate in conventions or democratic processes. If their movement was strong and vital, justice would follow. He asked what authority had the right to exclude them, or deny them representation. Far from being an obscure body, the Labour movement, he asserted, was central to any political process in the county, and no valid convention could be held without its inclusion.[111]

In February 1909, Mr. Maurice Healy was greeted with prolonged cheers as he took the stage at a political rally in Cork City. He humbly acknowledged the difficulty of following in the footsteps of Mr. O'Brien, but expressed confidence that O'Brien had smoothed the path ahead for him. Healy expressed his belief that the people would remain true to the commitment they had made just a fortnight earlier, drawing more cheers from the audience. He spoke warmly about the deep bonds of personal affection that linked Mr. O'Brien to the people of the constituency but stressed that something even more important was at stake — the policy for which O'Brien stood. It was as a humble supporter of that policy, Healy said, that he presented himself before the meeting, and this was met with enthusiastic approval.

Declaring himself an unwavering advocate of the cause of Home Rule, Healy turned to the question of the methods by which Home Rule should be achieved. He condemned the "foulest and basest" misrepresentations that had recently been made against Mr. O'Brien, who had been falsely

[111] *Skibbereen Eagle 6/11/1909*

accused of factionalism, disruption, and opposition to a pledge-bound Irish Party. Healy insisted that these charges were wilful and malicious lies. He argued that a united Irish Party was not merely desirable but essential. However, unity alone was not enough. "You can have a united band of brigands," he said to loud laughter and cheers, "but their unity does not make them any less a menace." Similarly, a united Irish Party based on wrong principles or misguided policy could harm the cause rather than help it.

Healy reminded the crowd that Mr. O'Brien's policy had not changed. O'Brien had recently warned that Home Rule in the newly elected Parliament was impossible, and that those claiming otherwise were deceiving the people. Events in the last week, Healy said, had fully vindicated O'Brien's warning and proven the falsehood of his critics' claims.

Turning to the recent Budget, Healy said he had opposed it in the House of Commons because he believed it to be a fraudulent and plundering measure against Ireland. He said it did not matter to him if it was a good Budget for England — it was disastrous for Ireland. He expressed horror that a responsible group of Irishmen had urged the Irish Party to support the Budget without altering so much as a syllable. He asked the audience to recall that the Cork Trades Council's resolution backing the Budget had not originated in Cork city, but had been inspired from elsewhere. Their only mistake, he suggested, was that they had acted a week too late.

Healy's speech seems to have connected with the audience, reinforcing loyalty to O'Brien's leadership and policies, while also warning against what he regarded as shallow or misguided notions of unity.[112]

At the annual Irish Trades Union Congress in May 1910, Mr. P. Murphy, President of the Cork Trades Council, expressed the hope that the holding of the Congress in the town of Dundalk would help to extend the trades union movement in

[112] *Irish Independent 21/2/1909*

their midst, and that the workers of Dundalk would soon reap the benefit of it.[113]

In June 1910, Mr. P. Murphy, J.P., President of the Cork Trades Council, addressing a meeting of the Organising Committee of the All-for-Ireland League in Cork, said that All-for-Irelanders were now more numerous than ever before. Hundreds of the Molly Maguires had joined them, having seen through the policy preached by their "so-called leaders," and realising that they had been duped. Cork City, he declared, would, at the first opportunity, rid itself of those who were currently misrepresenting the city and county. The next election would be a battle into which they would go cheerfully, confident that they would win a majority never before seen in Irish politics. He concluded by expressing the belief that it would not be long before their movement extended throughout all Ireland.[114]

In August 1910, Mr. Charles Bunworth, presiding at a meeting of the Cork Trades Council, referred to the employment of soldiers in the Post Office. He stated that, despite the contrary answer given to Mr. William O'Brien in Parliament, he had it on the best authority that soldiers were allegedly interfering with certain telegraphists. He expressed the hope that their members in Parliament would pursue the matter further.[115]

In late September 1910, a meeting of the Cork Stonecutters' Union was held on Tuesday night in the rooms, 21 Douglas Street. Mr. P. Murphy, president of the Cork Trades Council, was present. The meeting considered the importation of stone for the works connected with the new City Railways, and also the question raised by an individual named Mr. Hill, stating that he could not obtain stone locally for the new

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[113] *Dundalk Democrat 21/5/1910*

[114] *Irish Independent 16/6/1910*

[115] *Irish Independent 8/8/1910*

Technical Schools. A number of letters from various quarry owners were read.[116]

[116] *Evening Echo 22/9/1910*

D.D. Sheehan BL, a native of (and later MP for) Mid/North Cork, served as the energetic president of the Irish Land and Labour Association.

RISING VOICES
HARD LESSONS - HARDER WINS, 1911-1915

During the proceedings of the annual Irish Trades Union Congress, which took place in Belfast during June 1911, at which Mr. J. Larkin was present, he put forth a few questions about the Workers' Union. Among these were whether the union was expelled from the Cork Trades Council "owing to certain things they did in Cork," and whether they were expelled by the Dublin Trades Council for the same alleged reason that they were expelled by the Cork Trades Council, being the practice of 'black-legging'. A subsequent motion was unanimously adopted, which amounted to the refusal of affiliation of that union.[117]

In July 1911, during trade union proceedings on the topic of the National Insurance Bill, the Dublin Trades Council forwarded the following resolution for consideration:

> *"That in view of the pronouncement of the Catholic Hierarchy of Ireland with reference to the National Insurance Bill, this Executive of the Dublin Trades Council is of the opinion that a joint deputation from the Irish Trades Congress Parliamentary Committee and the Dublin, Belfast, and Cork Trades Councils should wait on the Chancellor of the Exchequer to lay before him the views of the Irish workers as expressed at the recent Irish Trades Congress. That copies of this resolution be forwarded to the Parliamentary Committee of the Irish Trades Congress and the Belfast and Cork Trades Councils."*

In this connection, a telegram was received from Mr. John Murphy, Secretary of the Belfast Trades Council, announcing that their Council had decided, in the event of a deputation from the Parliamentary Committee being

[117] *Connacht Tribune 10/6/1911*

appointed, to also join them in interviewing the Chancellor of the Exchequer.[118]

At a meeting of the Cork & District Trades Council in October 1911, the following resolution was adopted:

> "*That we reiterate our belief that the provisions of the Insurance Bill would prove of great assistance to the working classes in periods of illness and unemployment, more especially in urban districts, and that, while making all legitimate efforts to adapt it more to Irish needs, we urge that the Bill should be supported by the Irish representatives in Parliament.*"[119]

A Cork District Trades Council meeting was held in January 1912 at 34 Mary Street, with Mr. McNamara presiding. The delegates in attendance represented the various trade unions, including the bookbinders, carpenters, engineers, plumbers, painters, shipwrights, and typographers, among others. The Hon. Secretary reported that in connection with a previous decision of the Council, a letter had been sent to Mr. J. Houlihan, member of the Irish Insurance Commission. However, no response had been received yet, and it was suspected that the Commission was uncertain about what action to take regarding the current arrangements. The Secretary noted that there was little time left before the Insurance Act needed to be implemented in July, and there were also concerns about the Commission's preparedness to meet the necessary requirements. The President suggested that the matter be deferred until the reply from the Commission was received, which was agreed upon by the Council.

The Secretary also raised a concern regarding local printing orders being sent out of Cork city to be completed elsewhere. This was seen as detrimental to local businesses, especially when the work could have been done in Cork city at a reasonable cost. It was pointed out that if the work had been

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[118] *Freemans Journal 5/7/1911*

[119] *Freemans Journal 20/10/1911*

kept local, it could have supported employment in Cork city, and if the work had been done properly, the printers' society would not have complained. There was a general consensus that the practice of outsourcing work was damaging to local trade and employment.

Mr. O'Callaghan spoke on a related matter, mentioning an election for a Councillor in the West Ward. He noted that one of the candidates had presented himself as a labour candidate, but there was some uncertainty about whether he truly represented the labour interests of the body. The President clarified that, in his view, any labour aligned candidate running in a municipal election must have the endorsement of the Council to speak on their behalf. Mr. O'Callaghan felt that expressing this opinion would suffice in the matter, and the discussion on this issue ended.

The President reminded the Council that their annual meeting would take place in two weeks' time, during which elections for officers would be held. He encouraged delegates to ensure that any new motions or recommendations were sent to the Secretary in advance.

Mr. O'Callaghan also remarked that one of the delegates, Mr. Reardon, was preparing to leave the Council. He expressed that Mr. Reardon had been an excellent member, always showing a strong interest in the work of the Council. The Council regretted his departure but wished him the best of luck and success in his new role. Mr. Twomey also supported these sentiments, stating that Mr. Reardon's contributions to the union movement would be greatly missed. The President echoed these thoughts and thanked Mr. Reardon for his dedication and service. The meeting concluded after these remarks.[120]

Later that January, the annual general meeting of the Cork District Trades Council took place at the rooms on Mary Street, with Mr. R. S. McNamara, the President, in the chair. Several trade unions were represented at the meeting, including bookbinders, carpenters, engineers, plumbers, the

[120] *Evening Echo 12/1/1912*

plasterers, painters, the shipwrights, stonecutters, and typographers.

A letter from Mr. J. F. O'Riordan was read aloud, acknowledging the receipt of a message from the Secretary, Mr. D. Dennehy, conveying the Trades Council's good wishes as he prepared to depart for the United States. Mr. O'Riordan expressed his sincere appreciation of the Trades Council's support and reassured them of his continued interest in the future progress of the Council and in advancing the cause of Trades Unionism. The letter was ordered to be included in the minutes.

Rev. Brother Walker also sent an invitation to the members of the trades societies to attend a lecture and entertainment at the North Monastery. The lecture, titled "The Last Chieftain of Dunboy," was scheduled for the following evening (Friday), and Rev. Brother Walker extended an invitation to the wives of the members as well. Mr. Dennehy acknowledged the invitation, stating that the members would likely take up the offer.

The Cork Executive Council of the Gaelic League also sent a letter inviting representatives from all local clubs, societies, leagues, and organisations to attend a general meeting on Sunday, February 11th, at 4 o'clock at the Don, Queen Street. The purpose of the meeting was to organise the St. Patrick's Day procession. The President confirmed that individual trades would send delegates, and the Council would appoint additional delegates at the next meeting. The balance sheet for the year was presented. The Association began the year with £6 5s to its credit, received £12 5s in income, spent £11 1s 8d, and had a closing balance of £7 8s 7d.

The election of officers then took place. Mr. O'Callaghan proposed Mr. McNamara for re-election as President for the coming year, highlighting his regular attendance at meetings and his significant contributions, particularly regarding the Insurance Bill. Mr. O'Carroll seconded the motion, and there were no other nominations. Mr. McNamara was re-elected as President and expressed his gratitude for the confidence

placed in him, pledging to continue working for the Council's success.

Mr. Thomas Fitzpatrick was unanimously elected as Vice-President, with Mr. Hawkins proposing and Mr. Ahern seconding the motion. In his acceptance speech, Mr. Fitzpatrick expressed his pride in being part of the Council and emphasised the transparent and principled manner in which the Council conducted its business. He pledged to offer his full support during his term.

Mr. Denis Dennehy was re-elected as Secretary, with the motion proposed by Mr. Hawkins and seconded by Mr. Bolton. In his speech, Mr. Dennehy reaffirmed the Council's commitment to its members and emphasised that the Council was solely focused on the interests of the working man and was not politically motivated. Lastly, Mr. Manning proposed the re-election of Mr. Kennedy O'Callaghan as Treasurer. He praised Mr. O'Callaghan for his careful management of the Council's finances and his generosity towards members when they needed assistance.[121]

Another meeting of the Cork District Trades Council was held in February, in the rooms on Mary Street. Mr. R. S. McNamara, the President, presided over the meeting. Several of the affiliated bodies were represented.

Rev. Brother Walker, from the North Monastery, had sent a letter dated January 30th, explaining that due to a small turnout on Friday, January 26th, the planned lecture for the trade societies had to be postponed. The lecture would now take place on Friday, February 9th, at 8 PM. It would be followed by an entertainment featuring choruses, recitations, and dancing. The Secretary confirmed that he had read the letter to the members of his trade and was confident that other secretaries had done the same. The President expressed his belief that the lecture would be well worth attending.

The Cork Executive Council of the Gaelic League sent an invitation to the Council members to attend a public meeting

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[121] *Cork Examiner 27/1/1912*

on Wednesday, February 14th, to discuss the treatment of the Irish language by the National Board of Education. The meeting would feature Dr. Hyde, the General Secretary of the Gaelic League, and other prominent educationalists. Mr. O'Callaghan moved that the Council officially respond to the invitation, and the motion was unanimously approved.

In response to an invitation from the St. Patrick's Day Celebration Committee to send delegates to their meeting on Sunday to discuss arrangements for the celebration, it was agreed, on the motion of Mr. O'Callaghan, that Messrs. Manning and Fitzpatrick be appointed as delegates. However, it was clearly understood that they had no authority to incur any expenses on behalf of the Council in relation to the celebration.

The Secretary read a letter from the National Health Insurance Commission, Ireland, acknowledging receipt of the Trades Council's letter of February 1st. The Commission confirmed that they intended to send one of their organising lecturers to Cork city soon to explain the objectives and provisions of the National Insurance Act. They also planned to establish classes in Cork to provide special instruction to duly accredited officials of existing organisations, such as friendly societies. The President commented positively on this development, noting that it had previously only been reported that such classes would be organised in Dublin and Belfast. The Secretary also raised a point regarding the Insurance Bill, specifically about the matter of approved societies. He mentioned that his concern was with the branches of amalgamated bodies.[122]

At a meeting of Cork Corporation around that same time, in relation to nominations for the Technical Committee, the following letter was presented:

> *"**Cork District Trades Council***
> ***34 Mary Street,***
> ***8th February, 1912.***

[122] *Evening Echo 10/2/1912*

Dear Sir,

I would like to bring to the attention of the members of the Corporation that Mr. H. S. McNamara and I are seeking election to the Technical Committee as President and Secretary, respectively, of this Council. As the members of the organisation affiliated with our Council are directly concerned with a significant number of the classes currently taught at the Technical Institute, we believe our claim to representation on the Committee is at least as strong as that of other labour bodies in the city. No reasonable argument can be made against our right to representation in this election.

Is it fair and honourable to give ample representation to one section and deny it to others? Is it possible to divide representation equally between the two bodies? Surely, justice and fair play should govern this matter. Denying representation to our Council could only foster resentment and a sense of injustice. However, providing equal representation to both sides would be a just and equitable solution. Should the Corporation respond positively to our modest request, I would respectfully suggest the selection of Mr. McNamara. If the spirit of this letter receives a sympathetic response from the Borough Council, it could be the first step toward establishing a new foundation of cooperation among the now divided labour bodies in Cork.

Sincerely yours,
Mr. Dennehy"

Alderman Meade stated that there was a motion standing in his name, which, if taken up at this point, could prevent further lengthy discussion. His motion was:

"That the President and Secretary of the Cork District Trades Council be added to the list of members of the Technical Instruction Committee." He argued that this body should receive the same recognition as the Development Association or the Trades Council in Grattan Street."

He moved the suspension of the standing orders to allow consideration of his motion. Mr. Hart seconded the motion,

emphasising that the Cork District Trades Council was a significant entity in the city. He pointed out that 11 trades bodies were affiliated with the Council, comprising 1,896 men, which could represent approximately 7,584 people, assuming each member had a family of four. Mr. Delea interjected with "Oh, shut up," which prompted the Lord Mayor to call for order.

Mr. Hart continued, highlighting that many of the students at the Technical Schools were from the trades represented by the Cork District Trades Council, including carpenters, painters, decorators, engineers, plumbers, and plasterers. He argued that should these students withdraw, the Technical Schools would suffer. He emphasised that the request for representation had nothing to do with politics and merely sought fair recognition for the workers who made up a significant part of the school's student body. Mr. Egan opposed the motion, stating that the Cork Trades and Labour Council in Grattan Street was the only recognised trade body in the city, having been affiliated with the Irish Trades Union Congress. He pointed out that the Cork District Trades Council was a seceding body from the parent organisation and would not be recognised as a legitimate trade union body until it rejoined.

Alderman Cronin responded by stating that the focus should be on recognising all trade bodies, without regard for any existing divisions between them. Alderman McKecher added that unskilled labour was the largest portion of the workforce and had no representation on the Cork District Trades Council. Mr. Lang expressed his surprise at hearing workers speak out against their fellow workers. He praised the intelligence and practicality of the men involved in the motion, particularly Mr. Denis Dennehy, and argued that the Cork District Trades Council was strong enough to deserve representation on the Technical Committee.[123]

In March, at a meeting of the Cork District Trades Council, Mr. T. Fitzpatrick presided. A letter was read from Mr. D. A. Kiely, thanking the Council for the vote of condolence sent

[123] *Cork Examiner 10/2/1912*

to the relatives of the late Mrs. Kiely. Additionally, a letter from the Gaelic League was read, expressing gratitude for the reception given to their delegation in connection with the St. Patrick's Day procession.

Mr. Ahern brought attention to the fact that the Congested Districts Board, which was involved in the relief of the poor in certain parts of Ireland, had invited tenders for the construction of boats. Despite Passage being a prominent centre for boat building, it was announced that a firm from the North of Scotland had been awarded the contract for building all the boats. Mr. Ahern noted that none of the boats would be built in Ireland, particularly in places like Cork, where the boats could have been constructed more efficiently and cost-effectively. Mr. Dennehy mentioned that a similar issue had arisen previously regarding the Congested Districts Board ignoring local tenders. He had written to the Board on behalf of the Council, receiving a response stating that they would give future tenders from local firms due consideration. Given this previous commitment, Mr. Dennehy expressed his concern as to why the contract had been awarded to a Scottish firm instead of a local Irish firm.

Mr. Ahern clarified that the local firm had bid a very reasonable price, and there were many positive comments about the quality of work that would be provided. However, he agreed with Mr. Dennehy's sentiment that it was a questionable decision to award the contract to a foreign firm rather than a local one. A delegate voiced strong disapproval of the decision, arguing that the Congested Districts Board's actions should be condemned. The Board, which was meant to promote Irish manufacturing, should not hinder Irish industry by outsourcing work to Scotland.

The Council agreed that the best course of action was to communicate with the Congested Districts Board and other relevant authorities, asking them to provide an explanation for their decision and to reconsider awarding such contracts to local Irish firms in the future.[124]

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[124] *Cork Examiner 9/3/1912*

An April meeting of the Cork District Trades Council was held in the Mechanics' Hall, Great George's Street. Mr. Bray, General Manager of the Labour Exchange and Unemployment Insurance, Westminster, forwarded a copy of the regulations made by the Board of Trade under Section 91 of the National Insurance Act concerning questions of whether certain benefits were payable to workmen or certain groups of workmen.

There was discussion regarding the appearance of a new daily labour paper in Cork, which included a special feature listing trade unions and affiliated societies. The chairman thought it would be appropriate for the Council to publicly express sympathy with the victims of the Titanic disaster, considering the tragedy's universal shock. He proposed that a resolution be sent to the White Star Line, expressing the Trades Council's condolences to the bereaved families and recognition of the brave actions of the ship's crew. Mr. Joseph O'Brien seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously. A copy of the resolution was to be forwarded to the White Star Line.

Next, Mr. Kelleher proposed the following resolution:

> *"That this Council condemn the agreement that exists between various drapers' employers in the city, whereby they refuse to employ assistants from one house to another when vacancies arise in their establishments, effectively preventing legitimate promotions and opportunities for their workers."*

Mr. Kelleher expressed regret that such a situation had arisen, but emphasised that the alleged agreement had been in place for the past few years. He stated that such a practice was contrary to trade union principles and detrimental to the workers, who had no means of advancement unless they sought employment outside Cork. He believed this was a retrograde and unfair practice. Another delegate, in seconding the motion, expressed his disappointment with the situation. He argued that it not only hurt workers but was also detrimental to the commercial prosperity of the city, as it restricted workers' mobility and their ability to improve their positions.

Mr. Whealan also supported the motion, saying that the issue affected not only drapers but workers in general. He pointed out that such practices hindered workers from improving their positions within Cork, making it harder for them to advance professionally. Mr. John Good further criticised the agreement, describing it as a "disgrace" and expressing disbelief that anyone could tolerate such a practice. He suggested that the employers were harming their own interests by imposing such restrictions.

Hope was expressed by a delegate that the drapers' employers would reconsider and adopt a more progressive attitude. He mentioned similar cases where businesses had succeeded by adopting a more flexible approach to worker promotion. Mr. Fitzpatrick, the Secretary, stated that the Drapers' Association had shown no inclination to address the complaint. He expressed his frustration with the employers' refusal to reconsider the practice, particularly its impact on junior workers who had no means of advancement under the current system. The motion to condemn the agreement was passed unanimously. Mr. J. O'Brien proposed a vote of thanks to the Corporation for their efforts in dealing with the dock workers' dispute, specifically regarding the arrest of workers during a strike. Mr. Matthews seconded this vote, and it was agreed to forward it to the appropriate authorities.

Lastly, Mr. Liston raised his concerns about a recent development involving workers in connection with the local railway system. He expressed frustration that, while workers had been reinstated, they were only taken on temporarily and faced significant challenges in securing permanent positions. He noted that such practices were not conducive to good industrial relations, and the workers felt exploited. He hoped that a solution would be found, and that the employers would reconsider their position. The matter was deferred for further discussion at the next meeting. The meeting was adjourned, with several delegates appointed to follow up on ongoing concerns.[125]

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[125] *Evening Echo 19/4/1912*

At a May meeting of the same organisation, with Mr. McNamara presiding, the Chairman stated that in connection with the importation of marble to the work of the Munster and Leinster Bank, he had received the following letter:

> *"**Minister and Leinster Bank Ltd.***
> ***General Manager's Office***
> ***Cork, 18th April, 1912***
>
> *Dear Sir,*
>
> *I refer to your letter of the 16th inst. to Mr. Hill, and he assures me in reply that there is a considerable amount of marble we wish to import, for which we intend to give marble workers in Ireland an opportunity to estimate for. He further informs us that the marble on the ground chiefly consists of second-hand columns and pilasters.*
>
> *Yours sincerely,*
> *General Manager"*

The Chairman then continued, stating that in connection with the matter, the statement made by Mr. Hill in the letter was not entirely accurate. A firm in Bristol employing non-union labour had secured the majority of the marble work, while Dublin and other Irish firms were neglected. He suggested that Mr. Hill be asked to receive a deputation on the subject. The Hon. Secretary (Mr. D. Dennehy) expressed his willingness to accompany the deputation, and it was agreed that all work in connection with the bank should be carried out under the recognised union conditions.

Mr. O'Callaghan referred to the Harbour Board employing labourers using plasterers' tools for jobs, and questioned why the Harbour Board could not employ one of the union plasterers for such work. Some time ago, they had received an assurance that, should such work arise, plasterers would be given a chance.[126]

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[126] *Cork Examiner 4/5/1912*

At a meeting of trades union activists on the turn of July, At a meeting in Passage, the workmen were gathered with Mr. Fitzpatrick, presiding. The following resolution was proposed by Mr. T. O'Mahony and seconded by Mr. O'Brien:

> *"That we, the workers of Passage West and district, hail with pleasure the action of the Cork Harbour Commissioners, the Cork Trades and Labour Council, the Cork District Trades Council, and the Cork Board of Guardians in deciding to present an address of welcome to Mr. Winston Churchill on the occasion of his forthcoming visit to Cork Harbour. We further note with pleasure that the above-named bodies have determined to urge upon Mr. Churchill the claims of the Passage Docks to a share of the Government repair work."*

In speaking to the resolution, Mr. O'Mahony said that it was not necessary for him to dwell on the great amount of unemployment which prevailed in the district at the present time. The fact was too well known to them all to require elaboration, but in connection with the matter, he thought they would be failing in their duty if they did not acknowledge the efforts now being made to remedy the present deplorable state of affairs in the district. He also wished to take cognisance of the actions of those men who had risen above all other considerations in an honest effort to better the lot of their fellow workers.

He emphasised that if ever energetic action were required, it was required now on behalf of the workers of that district. Unless the Admiralty could be induced to send some repair work to the Passage Docks, Passage might face a fate similar to Goldsmith's "Deserted Village." While there may be technical objections against giving Government repair work to private docks, Mr. O'Mahony was sure that when the bodies named in the resolution presented the issue to Mr. Churchill, they would demonstrate the necessity of providing employment in the district. He believed that technicalities could be overcome if the needs of the people were considered, and he was confident that Mr. Churchill, in his wisdom, would prioritise the wellbeing of the workers over bureaucratic rules.

In connection with this, Mr. O'Mahony reminded everyone that, in former days, the Passage Docks were practically a training ground for the Royal Navy, and many men from the area had joined the service and contributed greatly both to the Navy and to the prosperity of the Passage Docks. Concluding, Mr. O'Mahony mentioned that he believed he had said enough to clarify their position and that he was confident the resolution would receive the approval of the workers of Passage and the surrounding district, who were represented at the meeting in such large numbers. This was met with an applause.

The Chairman then added that the resolution, as proposed by Mr. O'Mahony and seconded by Mr. O'Brien, would, of course, receive their unanimous approval. The fate of Passage had been very difficult for many years, but the involvement of the Right Honourable Lord of the Admiralty, along with the support of the Trades Council and other public bodies, could herald a brighter future for the town. They would have the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to the cause, and he was confident that Mr. Churchill's forthcoming visit would result in positive changes, leading to greater prosperity for Passage. The Chairman then put the resolution to a vote, and it was carried unanimously.[127]

With the visit of Winston Churchill to the Port, Mr. P. Lynch read the following address from the Cork United Trades and Labour Council:

> *"Right Honourable Sir,*
>
> *We, the members of the Cork United Trades and Labour Council, beg to offer you a hearty welcome and to extend a warm and sincere greeting on your visit among us. We earnestly trust that your personal inspection of our port, which is bountifully blessed by nature and geographically so placed as to be the best base for the North Atlantic Fleet, will*

[127] *Cork Examiner 1/7/1912*

convince you of the necessity of its development as a naval station and dockyard.

As you enter our port today, you cannot fail to see the advantages it holds for His Majesty's Fleet. The largest vessel in the world can enter our harbour at any stage of the tide without difficulty, and yet, not for repairs, not for relief, but to bear away across the broad waters of the western ocean the life-blood and sinew of the sons and daughters of the Emerald Isle, to build up a greater island across the sea.

All along the shores of our seaport towns and in our cities, the nails of the emigrant have taken the place of the rhythm of machinery and the hum of the hammer on the anvil. Is the hum of industry to be heard no more? The hope of Southern Capital is upon you, my lord, and as you pass up the river today, on your left and right hand sides of the channel, you will see the Royal Victoria Docks at Passage and Rushbrooke, at one time employing close to 1,000 hands, and which can boast of performing the largest repair job in the world—viz., the reconstruction of the ship "Manxman", which was rebuilt from the water's edge.

How often do you hear it said in Ireland—'plenty of men; plenty of materials; splendid advantages and workmanship; side by side with any dockyard in the kingdom, but unfortunately, no work'? We earnestly hope that your great influence will be used to remedy this great want of employment, and we pray that you may be long spared to distribute the even-handed justice and kindly, sympathetic nature which your noble heart possesses.

We, as the representatives of the mechanics and tradesmen, trust that you and Mrs. Churchill may be spared for many years of happiness together, and we earnestly hope your kind friendship and sympathy towards the Green Isle will increase one hundredfold."

Mr. Churchill, in reply, said:

"Gentlemen,

I thank you very much for the felicitous and moving terms in which your address is couched, and I can assure you that if it falls within my duty to discharge my functions as a member of the Board of Admiralty, I shall always be glad if that duty comes in the direction of assisting to maintain the welfare of your port and city, and to develop the great natural advantages which this Southern harbour undoubtedly possesses."

This was met with an applause.

Mr. Denis Dennehy, Hon. Secretary of the Cork District Trades Council, then said that on behalf of his body, which represented a large number of workers in the city and harbour districts, he begged to join with the other members of the deputation in offering Mr. Churchill a hearty welcome to the port. He trusted that the visit might herald increased employment in Haulbowline Dockyard, and improved the working conditions for the workers. He also hoped that it might have a positive impact on the neighbouring dockyards at Passage West and Haulbowline by giving them a fair chance of tendering for work when offered to private shipyards by Government departments. As workers, he had recognised and keenly valued the democratic measures with which Mr. Churchill had been associated as a distinguished member of the present Government, and more especially the courageous and benevolent efforts made in the interests of the working people. In the belief that these efforts were likely to be persevered in, they looked forward to the future more hopefully and assured Mr. Churchill of the prevailing goodwill and support of their working population in the promotion of all desirable social reforms.

Mr. Churchill replied by saying:

"I thank you very much for having joined with the other public bodies in welcoming me."

Mr. Bradley, President of the Cork County grouping of the Irish Land and Labour Association, read the following address:

"To the Right Honourable Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty.

My Lord,

At a convention of the Cork County Land and Labour Association, a body representing the majority of the workingmen of the County of Cork, it was unanimously decided that I should, on their behalf, bid you a hearty and cordial welcome on the occasion of your visit to Cork Harbour. I know that the great advantages offered to the Admiralty and to commerce by this harbour will be fully dealt with and pointed out to you by those who are intimately acquainted with the great possibilities it is capable of and the need that exists for greater patronage by the Admiralty.

The claims of the Passage Docks will also, I am sure, be clearly put before you, and the working people will look forward with confidence and hope that you will not be slow to appreciate the reasonableness and force of the claims which will be advanced on behalf of all those interested in the future welfare of our beautiful harbour.

The working population, too, has recognised the great services rendered to the toiling millions of our people in the United Kingdom by the Government of which you are a distinguished member. The great benefits of the various Acts which have recently been passed for the relief of the ill-paid working masses—the Labourers Act, the Old Age Pensions scheme, the Shop Acts, and the National Health Insurance Act—have all been passed in the face of the grossest and most unfair misrepresentation and criticism. But you and your Government can rest assured that the workers of the county and city of Cork have fully appreciated the noble work you have done and are doing in the interests of suffering humanity.

But beyond all this, the working masses of Ireland, and particularly of this county, are filled with gratitude for the noble and determined efforts your Government is making to satisfy the aspirations of the Irish people, who, in the face of centuries of famine, prison, suffering, and misgovernment, never lost the spirit of patriotism, nor their burning fervour

and love for Ireland, and the right of Irishmen to be governed by themselves. We all, therefore, look forward with confidence to the near future when, with a Parliament in College Green, England and Ireland may clasp hands in friendship and turn their faces to the world to receive its applause."[128]

At a meeting of the Cork District Trades Council in August 1912, presided over by Mr. R. S. McNamara, the Secretary mentioned that no reply had been received from Mr. William O'Brien and Mr. Maurice Healy regarding the resolution passed by the Council protesting against the treatment being meted out to fellow workmen in Belfast. Mr. O'Callaghan remarked that it was extraordinary, considering that those gentlemen claimed to represent them. The Hon. Secretary noted that he had received a reply from Mr. Redmond, and stated that the least to expect from the others was an acknowledgment. He further added that their Parliamentary representatives should raise their voices against the scandalous conduct in Belfast. The President pointed out that the Council represented a couple of thousand men, and that their communication should not be ignored. Mr. O'Callaghan commented that working people should remember the current conduct of their representatives. The President also reiterated that at the very least, an acknowledgment was due. Mr. O'Callaghan emphasised that Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Healy should identify themselves with the Council's protest against the rowdyism directed towards workmen in Belfast. On the motion of Mr. Fitzpatrick, it was unanimously decided to forward two guineas towards the relief fund.[129]

At a subsequent meeting of the Cork District Trades Council, Mr. O'Callaghan asked if there was any report from the representatives of that Council who took part in the deputation that waited on Mr. Churchill during his recent visit to the harbour.

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[128] *Evening Echo 2/7/1912*

[129] *Freemans Journal 9/8/1912*

The Secretary replied that he was present as a member of the deputation, which was a most representative one. The interview took place at Haulbowline, Co. Cork, and judging by the attitude of the First Lord, it was suggested that there was good reason to expect important developments in the dockyards in the harbour. Mr. Churchill was impressed with the great natural advantages which the harbour afforded as a naval base, and though somewhat guarded in his remarks to the gentlemen who addressed him, he pointed to the congested state of the ports in the south of England and contrasted it with the accommodation afforded by Cork Harbour, where there was plenty of room for dockyard extension.

The deputation did not confine themselves to the Haulbowline docks but also pressed the claims of Passage and Rushbrooke shipyards. Although these are private property, it was mentioned that increased work of a permanent character at Haulbowline, with the likelihood of a large number of war vessels constantly located in the harbour or its neighbourhood, would be bound to result in advantages for Passage and Rushbrooke shipyards. During his journey up the river, Mr. Churchill went as far as Passage and inspected the docks, and could not but have been impressed with the existing position of matters there, when compared with what it could be.

On the whole, the feeling was general among the deputationists that Cork Harbour was likely to benefit to a very important extent due to the new distribution of vessels which appeared to be contemplated by the Admiralty as the outcome of the naval policy now taking shape. Messrs. Enright, O'Callaghan, Carey, Fitzpatrick, and others expressed hopeful views, as they believed the Admiralty Board were influenced by the necessity of having a position to repair their vessels at an important naval centre like that of Cork Harbour. The report was deemed satisfactory.

The Chairman drew attention to the matter regarding the attack on Catholic workmen in Belfast, and thought it was a matter that should be noted. Mr. Bolton, as a Protestant workman, denounced the conduct referred to as disgraceful,

and did not believe any trade unionist, no matter what his creed, would approve of it. He moved that the Council strongly condemn the inhuman attack on Catholic fellow workmen in a Belfast shipyard, and that the resolution be sent to the leaders of the Irish and Organised Labour parties, and the city members. This was seconded by Mr. O'Callaghan and passed unanimously.

Mr. W. Carey complained about one of the city fathers going to London to get a door and frame made for him. The work could be as well done in Cork as in London. Messrs. Donovan and Ronayne supported Mr. Carey's remarks, and thought it was an inexcusable act on the part of the gentleman referred to. Auditors were appointed for the half-year's accounts, some routine business was transacted, and the meeting adjourned.[130]

At an August 1912, meeting, at which Mr. McNamara presided, arising out of the reading of the minutes, which contained a reference to a reply from Mr. John E. Redmond, M.P., to the Council's resolution of protest in connection with the Belfast riots, Mr. O'Callaghan asked if any reply had been received from their city Parliamentary representatives. The Secretary (Mr. D. Dennehy) answered in the negative. Mr. O'Callaghan remarked that such was "extraordinary." The Secretary noted that a reply had been received from Mr. Redmond, but not from Mr. O'Brien or Mr. Healy. In response, Mr. O'Callaghan angrily remarked that those were two gentlemen "who claim to represent us."

The Secretary said that he was surprised himself that he did not receive a reply from those gentlemen. In face of the continuance of the disturbances, he thought that their city Parliamentary representatives might have raised their voices against such conduct. It was a scandalous state of affairs that their fellow-workmen in Belfast should be treated in such a cowardly manner. The positions held by Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Healy as Parliamentary representatives would justify them in raising their voices on the matter. The least those gentlemen

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[130] *Evening Echo 13/7/1912*

might have done was to acknowledge the Council's communication. The President noted that:

> *"We represent a couple of thousand men, and any communication from us should not be ignored by those gentlemen, no matter what our opinions are."*

Mr. O'Callaghan remarked that:

> *"They will ask the working people for their votes at the next election, but the working people should remember the attitude they have adopted in connection with the unfair treatment meted out to our fellow-workers in Belfast."*

The Secretary said that the Trades Council expected at least an acknowledgment to their communications. Mr. O'Callaghan said the Trades Council was composed of men of all shades of opinion, but they were unanimous in denouncing the ruffianly conduct that had been meted out to their fellow-workers in Belfast, and Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Healy should identify themselves with the proper resolution that the Council had passed. Mr. Cullinane suggested that perhaps Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Healy had been absent from Parliament and were therefore unable to raise their voices in protest. The Secretary replied that they had not even acknowledged the communication, and that was what they were complaining about.

Mr. Fitzpatrick said that, according to a report in the newspaper that evening, there had been a continuance of the disturbances in Belfast that day. That fact, of course, meant a continuance of unemployment for a large number of people. It was a sad state of affairs that decent workmen would not be allowed to perform their work due to the political feelings of some of the disturbers, and now a good many people were suffering in Belfast—in fact, women and children were starving there. He therefore proposed that the Council should take similar action to other parts of Ireland, and that a sum of £2 2s should be forwarded from the Council to the fund started to help the men who were out of employment through no fault of their own.

Mr. O'Callaghan said that it afforded him great pleasure to second the motion. It was only right, he believed, that they should come to the assistance of the sufferers. The conduct of the people who were responsible for the present state of affairs in Belfast was a disgrace to Ireland, no matter what the opinions of the people in question were, and every decent man should strongly protest against such acts of tyranny and rowdyism. The President remarked that he I didn't suppose "any man in the room will object to the proposal." The motion was unanimously adopted, and the meeting soon afterwards separated.[131]

In September 1912, at a meeting of the Cork Trades and Labour Council, presided over by Mr. M. Egan (President), several representatives were present from various unions, including tailors, masons, bricklayers, painters, Irish drapers, railway workers, corporation employees, and others. A circular was received in relation to the Bristol blind-workers' dispute, asking for support. The matter was referred to the Executive Committee for further discussion. A letter was also received from the Cork Executive Council of the Gaelic League, inviting the Trades Council to send a strong contingent to take part in a procession on Wednesday, marking the arrival of Very Rev. Canon O'Leary, and Dr. Kuno Meyer. These gentlemen were to be honoured with the freedom of the city. The President expressed that while the timing of their arrival, at half past two in the afternoon, was inconvenient for the workers, he believed many would still turn out to give them a hearty welcome. Alderman Kelleher also spoke in support of the revival of the Irish language, stating that the workers would always give their full support to this cause.

The Irish Glass Bottle Makers' Trade Protection Association forwarded a resolution thanking the Cork Trades Council for their stance on the foreign importation of glass bottles into Ireland, particularly Cork. The President explained that the action they had taken had already sparked correspondence from important individuals in the city, which was a positive start. While the home-manufactured bottles were not yet

[131] *Evening Echo 9/8/1912*

widely used, the Council now had some samples, and he suggested they be sent to the Vintners' Association for consideration. If the Association and the workers collaborated, good results could follow. Though the glass bottle industry was small at present, he believed it had great potential.

Regarding the recent meeting in Dublin on labor representation, Alderman Kelleher expressed his full agreement with the actions taken. He emphasised that workers did not intend to interfere with any political party until Home Rule was achieved, at which point they would seek representation in Parliament. The President agreed, stressing that the fight for labor representation should begin immediately, and that workers must ensure proper representation, not only in public boards but also in the Irish Parliament. He pointed out that workers were becoming increasingly educated and would soon be able to elect their own representatives, who truly represented their interests.

Mr. J. Good voiced a slightly different perspective, hoping that Home Rule would come soon, but emphasising that regardless of the timing, it was crucial for workers to start looking after their own interests. He warned against allowing capitalists to monopolise representation, and stressed that workers should not wait for Home Rule to act in their own best interest. The meeting ended shortly thereafter.[132]

In November 1912, at the Cork District Trades Council, a letter was read from Mr. Timothy Hegarty, Secretary of the Cork United Trades and Labour Council, Grattan Street, stating that at a meeting of his Council a discussion took place amongst the delegates, arising from a conversation with some members of the District Trades Council, regarding the advisability of a reunion of both Councils. The view was expressed that it was evident to every thinking man in the community that a division of this nature tended to weaken their position and do irreparable injury to the trades union movement in the city. In the course of the discussion that

[132] *Cork Examiner 21/9/1912*

followed, some members expressed sympathy with the idea of a reunion, but on a new basis.[133]

At a meeting of the Cork District Trades Council in December 1912, the Secretary read a letter from the Secretary of the Cork Harbour Commissioners stating that the communication received from the Council with reference to the proposed bridge in the harbour was receiving the attention of the Board. Mr. Ahern said that a conclusion had been practically arrived at in the matter. He took exception to the remarks of the Chairman of the Harbour Board, who had said that the Council had no right to comment on the actions of the Board. As the representative of the men directly concerned, he thought they knew as much about it as the Chairman did. Furthermore, the Chairman had claimed the bridge would prevent small craft from passing through the river, despite the Admiralty's expert opinion to the contrary. Mr. Dennehy expressed that he did not understand the Chairman of the Harbour Board to have said that, or, if he did, he must have interpreted it differently. Mr. Hennessy criticised the suggestion by the Harbour Board's engineer for a ferro-concrete bridge, pointing out that it would send more money out of Ireland to pay for English cement.

The Secretary noted that the Council should be sincerely thankful to Messrs. Ahern and Cullinane for raising the matter. Their timely action, along with the Council's protest letter and a corresponding one from the Admiralty, led to an amicable resolution. They had not intended to cast aspersions on the Harbour Board, but the settlement was a satisfactory outcome. Mr. Cullinane confirmed that the workmen were pleased with the Council's intervention. The discussion then concluded. The Secretary then read a letter from the Secretary of the Trade and Labour Council:

> *"What is the new basis of representation for all affiliated bodies you refer to? When I shall receive full details of the new basis of representation, the Council will consider the same."*

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[133] *Cork Examiner 16/11/1912*

The Secretary commented that while union was strength, certain matters would need to be settled first. Re-union would not be achieved by levelling offensive remarks at each other. He referenced a question he had posed which a gentleman in authority at the Trade and Labour Council had described as "an impertinence," though he believed it was a pertinent question. The Chairman expressed full agreement.

The Secretary continued that the gentleman's view appeared not to have widespread support, and although some remarks made were perhaps jocular, no offence had been intended. They had merely asked if the Trade and Labour Council would recognise a new basis of representation decided upon at a conference. This would ensure equitable representation, safeguarding the interests of those bodies which originally founded the Council, and maintaining control by the Council itself without external wire-pulling. Mr. Ahern remarked that while there were discrepancies between the reports of proceedings and the Secretary's letter, it seemed the majority agreed on the desirability of joining forces for the common good. There was clearly room for only one Trades Council in Cork, and he was agreeable to reconciliation.

The Chairman stated that Mr. Ahern had voiced the opinion of the whole Trades Council. The division, he claimed, was not of their making, but had been forced upon them three years previously. Mr. O'Callaghan noted that some had taken exception to remarks he made, but he treated such criticisms with contempt. Mr. Cullinane said he believed the criticisms of Mr. O'Callaghan were unfair. Mr. O'Callaghan was entitled to his opinions, whether shared by the whole Council or not, and the Chairman of the Trade and Labour Council was wrong to say they would not touch them "with a forty-foot pole."

Mr. Fitzpatrick stressed that, before any action was taken, individual societies would have to be consulted. Even if a conference agreed a new basis of representation, much work would still be needed. The Council was currently in a flourishing condition and must consider whether it stood to gain or lose by reconciliation, although reunion would

certainly be in keeping with trade union principles. Mr. Dennehy proposed:

> *"That, subject to the approval of each affiliated body, we express our willingness to meet in conference the representatives of the other Council, with a view to a re-union on a new basis of representation, to be determined at the conference."*

This motion was seconded by Mr. Fitzgerald and passed unanimously. The Secretary was directed to communicate with each society to bring the matter before them. The following letter was then read:

> *"**Cork County and City Land and Labour Association***
> ***Patrick Street, Cork***
>
> *Dear Sir,*
>
> *Now that a great wave of democracy is sweeping over the world, and as union amongst all classes of people who toil and plod their weary lives in work and labour is most desirable, we shall be glad to know if your important body—representing as it does the vast majority of the trades of the city—would be prepared to consider the advisability of joining forces with the Cork City and County Land and Labour Association, thus forming one united body of trade and labour for the whole city and county of Cork.*
>
> *We feel that if your Council will take the matter in hand, all other isolated trade and labour associations throughout the county will immediately throw in their lot with the great and irresistible force of a united democracy.*
>
> *A meeting of the County Committee has been summoned for next Sunday, and we would appreciate receiving the views of your Council before that date, if convenient, so that the matter may have the earnest consideration of all branches representing a total of 5,000 organised men. We point out that this suggestion should appeal to your trade bodies, as many tradesmen in country districts, where no organised branches exist, already belong to our association.*

While making this suggestion, we do not compromise our association, as the matter will be placed before delegates representing all branches for a full and deliberate expression of opinion. We are confident, however, that they will recognise the great advantages of such a powerful combination, and that your body, too, will recognise the necessity for a grand reunion under the banner of democracy.

Yours sincerely,
P. Bradley, President
J. O'Mahony, Secretary"

Several members expressed support for the suggestion, but it was also decided that, with the proposed amalgamation with the trade and labour body already in motion, the Trades Council had enough matters in hand for the time being.[134]

At the Cork District Trades Council AGM of January 1913, The Secretary (Mr. Dennehy) read a letter from Mr. Charles Gillman, 3, Shamrock Cottages, Passage West, in acknowledgment of a vote of condolence passed to him by the Council on the death of his father. The letter was ordered to be inserted in the minutes.

A circular letter was read from Mr. F. W. McCarthy, Town Clerk, asking for a subscription towards the fund to defray the cost of the deputation appointed at the recent public meeting in the City Hall to go to London to press on the Admiralty the necessity of connecting Haulbowline Island with the mainland. Mr. Dennehy said that they could not contribute to a more worthy cause. Everybody recognised that if this extension was brought to issue, there was no doubt it would benefit not one locality, but all localities in the district. As the committee was going to work energetically, they should get every encouragement. Mr. Fitzpatrick said that it was a question that affected trades unionists most, and they should help in any way they could to bring about its success. He had pleasure in proposing that they give £2 2s to the fund. Mr. Coleman seconded. They were a young body

[134] *Cork Examiner 2/12/1912*

and would willingly give £5 if they could afford it. The motion was passed unanimously.

Mr. R. McNamara (Stonecutters), 74 Douglas Street, wrote complaining of the importation of marble for the Munster and Leinster Bank. As one of a number of men discharged at the bank premises owing to the importation, he felt it keenly to see crates of marble coming day after day to the bank from London and elsewhere. It was the greatest slur on the members of his business, and most scandalous to crush out of existence what was in the past, and promised to be in the future, a great industry. They had been led to believe that all Irish material and work would be used in the building. The chairman of the meeting of the Munster and Leinster Bank had said, in answer to Alderman Stack, who raised the question at the meeting, that their hands were clean. He (Mr. McNamara) did not think so, saying:

> *"Those most interested for good, as usual, waited for the workingman to do the ball-firing. We are the same workingmen today on the extension who had done bigger jobs in Ireland, England, and America."*

Mr. Enright said that six or eight weeks ago, when the architect wanted a railing, a balcony, or something like that, he walked into Perry's asking for estimates, and afterwards imported it from Belfast. A question had been asked by Alderman Stack, but of course he got an evasive answer. The railing imported could not compare with work done in Cork 200 years ago, and done today. To prove it, they need only look at the beautiful workmanship in the gates of county residences, and the railings around public buildings in the city, all the work of Corkmen. The way the directors of the bank were treating them was a shame.

Mr. Dennehy, as one of a deputation who waited on the directors of the bank, said that they met Mr. Willis, who gave them every possible assurance that the material necessary for the construction of the bank would be local material and put in by local men. Mr. Enright said that there was as good work turned out in County Cork as in any other part of Ireland, England, or Scotland. Mr. Dennehy asked if it were possible

to rectify matters now before they went any further.

Mr. Hennessy said that the matter was left in the hands of the architect; practically all the marble work was imported, except a small piece done by Mr. O'Connell. Mr. Dennehy suggested that they write to Mr. Willis pointing out to him that imported marble and other material was being used in the construction of the bank, contrary to the spirit of the interview he (Mr. Willis) had some time ago with a deputation from that Council. Mr. O'Leary handed in notice of motion of a resolution protesting against the appointment of Mr. R. F. Starke, R.M., as chairman of the Court of Referees under Part II of the National Insurance Act.

The election of officers was then proceeded with. On the proposition of the Chairman (Mr. McNamara), seconded by W. Enright, the Secretary, Mr. Dennehy, was unanimously reappointed. Mr. O'Callaghan, in supporting the proposition, said that Mr. Dennehy was worthy of any compliment they could pay him. Mr. Fitzpatrick also joined in eulogising the work of the Secretary. He had discharged his duties with ability and had shown the greatest interest in the progress and welfare of the Council.

Mr. Dennehy, in returning thanks, said that the Council was only established five years ago, and he was proud to say that it was in a strong position numerically and financially, although they were promised when they started that they would be extinct in a few months. Mr. Fitzpatrick here took the chair. Mr. Ahern proposed Mr. Murray for the chairmanship, but Mr. Murray declined, and on the proposition of Mr. Enright, who said they could not have a better chairman, seconded by Mr. Goulding, Mr. McNamara was re-elected chairman.

Mr. O'Callaghan proposed the re-election of Mr. Fitzpatrick to the vice-chair. He had acted with credit to himself and honour to the Council. Mr. Carey seconded, and it was passed unanimously. Mr. Fitzpatrick suitably returned thanks. Mr. Eunan proposed the re-election of Mr. O'Callaghan as treasurer, and it was carried unanimously. The balance-sheet showed that the balance to the credit of the Council was £10

14s 5d. Mr. Murray, as one of the auditors, said that the Council was going ahead by leaps and bounds. The Executive Committee were also re-elected.[135]

In March 1913, at the sitting in Cork City of the Treasury Committee on the question of extending insurance medical benefits to Ireland, the following representatives were examined:

- Mr. D. D. Sheehan, M.P., President of the Irish Land and Labour Association;
- Mr. Denis Dennehy, Cork District Trades Council;
- Mr. Dominick V. Daly, St. Finbarr's Diocesan Health Insurance Society;
- Mr. E. B. Williams, Mallow, on behalf of the Cork Incorporated Chamber of Commerce and Shipping;
- Dr. Philip G. Lee, for the Cork medical profession;
- and trade and labour representatives from Cork, Limerick, and Waterford.

Mr. Sheehan said there was no demand for medical benefits amongst the rural agricultural working population. The rural areas were sufficiently provided for under the Medical Charities Act, and workers in both urban and rural areas had no objection to receiving their medical benefit under the dispensary system.

Mr. Donnelly gave evidence supporting the extension of medical benefits, including for the dependants of insured persons. To Mr. Devlin, M.P., Mr. Donnelly stated that the working classes regarded the dispensary system as a humiliation:

> *"I never knew of a person going to the workhouse or the dispensary without feeling a sense of guilt."*

Mr. Devlin pointed out the contrast with Mr. Sheehan's view, who suggested people went there "with a spirit of delight." In reply to Mr. Devlin, Mr. Donnelly affirmed that workers would certainly prefer to pay rather than go to the

[135] *Evening Echo 24/1/1913*

dispensary. Answering Mr. Micks, he said the uninsured should also receive some consideration, similar to insured individuals.

If societies in urban areas were willing to pay for medical benefits, he would let them have them; but if benefits were provided, there would be a considerable financial residue—either £80,000 or £100,000. He suggested this should be used to eliminate slums by building decent houses for poor people at rents from 1s. to 1s. 6d. per week. Mr. Sheehan argued that the housing question was more vital than that of medical benefits. He did not think the artisan classes or the unskilled workers favoured medical benefits over that of housing.

Mr. P. Lynch (Cork United Trades Council) supported extending medical benefits, representing 5,000 skilled and unskilled workers. He argued that excluding families would create "gentlemen fathers and pauper children." Mr. O'Connor (Limerick Trade and Labour Council) supported the extension but was unsure if members would pay more than 1d. Mr. E. Williams advocated postponing the question for three years to allow funds to accumulate.[136]

In May 1913, Mr. R.S McNamara passed away at Douglas Street, Cork City centre. He was prominently associated with the Labour movement in the city. He served for several years as President of the Cork United Trades Association, and later as President of the Cork District Trades Council. A staunch Nationalist, Mr. McNamara was known for his many fine personal qualities, and his death is deeply regretted.[137]

Also in May, the twentieth annual Irish Trades Union Congress was opened in the City Hall in Cork, shortly after eleven o'clock in the morning. The Lord Mayor, attended by his secretary, sergeants, mace-bearers, and the city sword-bearer, came onto the platform and took the chair, amidst the applause of the delegates gathered in the body of the Hall.

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[136] *Irish Independent 10/3/1913*

[137] *Irish Independent 9/5/1913*

The arrangements were in the hands of the Cork United Trades and Labour Council. However, the Cork District Trades Council declined to take any part in the Congress, claiming they had been ignored by the officials of the Congress.[138]

At a Trades Council meeting in late May, the Secretary (Mr. Dennehy), having read the minutes, reported that he had received a letter from the Irish Industrial Development Association enclosing a progress report and appealing to the Council to subscribe to the Association's funds. The Council, he said, had not subscribed before as a body, though his own society had, and he believed all societies should continue to subscribe as before; however, the Council was not in a financial position to do so. Mr. O'Carroll suggested that they ought to recommend the trades to support the Association, considering it worthy of their backing. The matter then dropped.

Mr. Ahern proposed, and Mr. Coleman seconded, that Mr. Dennehy's name should be put forward to fill the vacancy on the National Insurance Committee. The motion was passed unanimously, and Mr. Dennehy suitably returned thanks to the members.

Mr. O'Carroll, with the Council's permission, stated he wished to correct a report that had appeared in the daily press the previous week. According to a statement attributed to Mr. Larkin, it would appear that their Association was being blamed for the troubles that befell the quay labourers four years earlier, following their secession from Grattan Street. Mr. O'Carroll said he was unsure if Mr. Larkin was to blame for this statement, since Larkin was not even in Cork at the time. He explained that the real reason for the separation from Mechanics' Hall was the introduction of rival candidates for Parliamentary honours into trade matters. A trades organisation, comprising men of diverse and often conflicting political views, should never be used by political wire-pullers for selfish ends. Despite protests from the various delegates representing the Engineers, Coopers,

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[138] *Cork Examiner 13/5/1913*

Typographical and other societies, no action was taken, so a new organisation was formed in June of that year.

Mr. O'Carroll said he could not understand how they could be held responsible for the troubles that began after their departure. Trades unionists must have a common platform for their social advancement, not for political campaigning. Every man was entitled to his own political and religious opinions, and there were enough other opportunities to exercise these outside of a trades hall.

Mr. Dennehy added that, regarding the strike at the quays three or four years ago, the statements made against them were untrue. The members of the Council were not involved with the Strike Committee, and indeed the Council had been in formation months before the strike took place. They had deliberately held back from any action so as not to harm the unfortunate men who were brought out on strike. He warned the working men of Cork against being misled by plausible speeches from street platforms. If advice was needed, they should seek it from their fellow-workers who understood their conditions, not from men like Larkin who, he claimed, were "growing fat by idling around and addressing them".

Mr. Coleman, speaking about their decision in not taking part in the Trades Congress held recently in Cork, said that three years previously, when they had sent delegates to the Congress in Dundalk, their representatives had been refused admission. Thus, their stance in Cork city a few weeks prior was, in a sense, forced upon them. The Irish Trades Union Congress, he said, ought to be the true voice of the Irish worker and conducted on fair and genuinely democratic lines. After some routine business, the meeting adjourned.[139]

At a July 1913 meeting of the Cork District Trades Council, with Mr. Carey presiding, Mr. Murray stated that he wished to make a few remarks regarding the present dispute in the furnishing trades. As far as the dispute had gone, there had been no practical development up to that point, but they had been informed by Mr. Kelleher, the head of Messrs. T. Lyons

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[139] *Evening Echo 30/5/1913*

and Co., that a meeting of the masters would be held the following morning at eleven o'clock, after which they might receive a definite answer to their request. He noted that the report which had appeared in the press during the week regarding the dispute had been very misleading to the public. It had been stated that the employers had offered an increase of 2s. 6d. all round to the men. While such an increase might suit men in some shops, it would not suit others.

Mr. Murray cited the example of the men in Grant's establishment, noting that not one man there was paid more than, or even as much as, what they were seeking at the present time. The holidays they were accustomed to being paid for were to be stopped, and they would be required to work five-and-a-half extra hours per week. When the number of hours was calculated, this would result in a decrease of 1s. 6d. in their weekly wages, not an increase. Instead of gaining, they would lose—4s. 6d. in holidays and extra work. In the case of the men working in the Arcade, Calk's, and Queen's Old Castle, their hours would not change, but holidays would be discontinued. The proposed 2s. 6d. increase meant that a man would put that amount into one hand and take 1s. 9d. out of the other. The public seemed to think that the proposed increase was very fair, but, Mr. Murray stressed, that was not the case. An increase of 2s. 6d. all round, without interfering with holidays, would certainly have been very acceptable to the majority of men; however, when employers offered an increase while simultaneously taking away holidays, he could not see how the men could accept it.

The standard rate of wages requested was 54s. 6d. per week, and considering the increase in the cost of living, he believed it was a reasonable demand. If they achieved that wage, the holiday question could then be dealt with separately by the people in authority. Holidays had always been paid for over the past twenty years in Cork, and now the employers sought to take that entitlement away, representing a loss to the workers. For himself, it would mean a loss of 4s. 6d. per week. While some said strikes were bad, he believed that strikes, when necessary under the circumstances, were not out of place.

The President expressed the hope that they would fight it out successfully and with credit to themselves. Mr. Dennehy stated that the sympathy of the Council was with the men in that dispute. Of course, everyone more or less disliked the idea of a strike, and a strike was also disagreeable to the men who took part in it. Mr. Murray added that it had been said by the masters that they received short notice of the strike. However, he clarified that the employers had received a week's notice of the workers' demands and had taken a week to consider it. On the Saturday night, a meeting of the men had been called, and the matter had been carried by a majority—to cease work on Monday. Therefore, it was the men who had, in fact, received short notice, not the employers.

Mr. Dennehy said they all hoped there would be a happy and speedy resolution to the strike, which so far had been conducted in a very peaceable manner. They hoped the result would prove satisfactory to both the men and the employers affected.

As the meeting drew to a close, Mr. Dennehy remarked that, as they were approaching the end of another half-year's work, he wished to highlight that the Council was in a sound financial position. He insisted that they were entirely self-reliant; they had never received, nor sought, subscriptions from outside sources, depending instead on the affiliated bodies for their revenue. He emphasised that this was an important fact to remember. Their funds were in a very sound and healthy condition, and he hoped that this pleasing state of affairs would always continue. The meeting then concluded.[140]

In October 1913, the '*Irish Worker*' publication reported on the appalling labour conditions at the Blackpool Flax Factory in Cork City, describing it as a "sweating den" of the worst kind. According to the contributor, who claimed to have personally witnessed the situation during early morning visits to the "Glen" area around 6 a.m., the factory workers—

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[140] *Evening Echo 25/7/1913*

whom they referred to as "white slaves"—appeared prematurely aged. The writer had attributed this condition to both insufficient nourishment, and the poverty wage rates paid, as evidenced by their gaunt appearance and inadequate clothing. From their own prior experience with factory work, the writer concluded that systematic exploitation, or "sweating," was rampant at the site. They described the factory as potentially unmatched in its cruelty within the history of industrial labour. The contributor listed some of the dire working conditions reportedly endured by Irish women and girls employed at the factory. They started their shifts at 6:30 a.m., with only a short breakfast break from 8 to 8:45. However, if there was no hot water in the boiler, the workers were left to eat without tea. A similar situation occurred during their 1 to 1:45 p.m. dinner break, which they were forced to take outside, exposed to all weather, sitting by the roadside. The management, the writer alleged, did not even provide shelter, despite enjoying profits generated by these very workers. The tea water, drawn from a nearby mill stream, was also used by local cattle for drinking and crossing, a fact the writer found both unsanitary and degrading.

The article condemned the punitive fines imposed on workers. According to the writer, reelers were fined 2s. for lateness on Monday mornings, and 8d. on other days—amounts taken from already meagre earnings of about 6s. per week. Similar penalties applied to other job roles: doffers, spinners, and preparers all faced financial deductions for minor infractions or accidents that, the writer argued, were often beyond their control. One particularly egregious example cited was the forfeiture of a 10s. bonus if a card caught fire in the machinery, regardless of fault—an act the writer viewed as a means of enriching shareholders at the workers' expense.

The '*Irish Worker*' editorial voice echoed the contributor's outrage, stating that such conditions were unbecoming of any society that claimed to be civilised. The piece criticised the apparent inaction of Factory Inspectors and Sanitary Officers, whom the writer accused of failing in their duties. It demanded accountability from factory directors for forcing

women and children to take meals in the open and use contaminated water. The failure to provide even basic sanitary or dining facilities was described as a "disgraceful abdication of human decency."

The publication also noted that the workers shared some responsibility for their plight, as they had the opportunity to organise through a trade union but had not done so. The contributor urged them to join the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (I.T.&G.W.U.), headquartered at Liberty Hall, under the leadership of Jim Larkin. They insisted that unionisation of the workforce was the only viable path to improved conditions.

The piece went on to highlight an incident involving a factory painter named Horan (or Hofran), who, according to the writer, hurled vile abuse at a young boy selling The Irish Worker outside the factory gates. The boy had politely invited him to purchase a copy of the paper, and in response, Horan reportedly launched a tirade against the publication, its editor, and the labour movement in general. The writer condemned this behaviour, warning Horan that he might one day find himself appealing to the same publication to air his own grievances, as had many others in the past.

In closing, the contributor expressed deep gratitude on behalf of the I.T.&G.W.U. Cork City Branch to the city's male and female workers for their generous support of the union's Sunday collections on behalf of striking workers in Dublin and their families. They condemned what they saw as the "relentless and Godless" tactics of capitalist employers, who they believed were attempting to starve innocent children into submission. The article expressed hope that solidarity among Cork workers would continue until labour organisation triumphed over employer tyranny.

The publication also reported on resolutions adopted at a recent I.T.&G.W.U. Cork City Branch meeting. The first strongly condemned Mr. Healy, M.P., for accepting a legal brief on behalf of employers in a case attempting to deny Irish workers the right to form and join trade unions. They called for his resignation, asserting that he was unworthy of

representing the Irish people. The second resolution praised the union's leader—presumably Jim Larkin—for his principled and statesmanlike defence of workers during the government's Court of Inquiry, chaired by Sir George Askwith. It also expressed thanks to English delegates who had supported Irish workers during their struggle for emancipation.[141]

At a November 1913 meeting of the Cork United Trades and Labour Council, Mr. T. Walsh (president) occupied the chair. The President also said that, unfortunately, the Dublin strike had not yet concluded. Although they were now approaching Christmas — the season of peace and goodwill — there seemed little chance of such sentiments prevailing in Dublin. However, he believed events were in motion that would soon bring an end to the desperate struggle. Speaking about the assistance given by the workers of Cork to those on strike in Dublin, he praised particularly the £5 subscription from the men of Passage, who had not earned a shilling for months — a most creditable act. He urged the men to continue their support for the Dublin workers. He also mentioned that the names of their candidates for the forthcoming municipal elections would be available shortly, and he called on all members to give them full support. A circular would be sent to the various societies requesting assistance, and he hoped it would meet with a generous response.

Alderman Kelleher endorsed the President's remarks concerning the Dublin strike. He congratulated the men on the gallant stand that they were making and stressed that the matter should be kept prominently before the public. He criticised the capitalist press for magnifying anything said to the detriment of the workers. Any minor differences between the leaders and the rank and file, he argued, ought to be settled quickly, because, he claimed, the Dublin struggle was fundamentally a fight for the survival of Trades Unionism. He urged continued support for the strikers, noting that affiliated bodies of the Council had already contributed between two and three hundred pounds. Speaking on the forthcoming elections, he emphasised that until workers were

[141] *The Irish Worker 11/10/1913*

properly represented on public boards, the Trades Union movement would not fulfil its potential. The candidates selected would be of high character and would understand the workers' needs.

Mr. Good commented on a statement reported in the papers, suggesting that some Labour leaders across the Channel did not approve of Mr. Larkin. Regardless of any personal differences, Mr. Good argued, this was not the time to air such grievances. He criticised Messrs. J. H. Thomas and Wilson for making public their disapproval, noting that many railwaymen did not hold Mr. Thomas in high regard, as reflected by numerous resolutions condemning his actions. Thousands of workers, he said, were doing their utmost to ensure that, should Dublin employers remain unreasonable, a general strike might be called. While he personally disliked strikes, Mr. Good believed that a general strike could be necessary to bring Dublin employers to their senses. He warned that employers were attempting to undermine the workers by attacking their leaders and urged members not to let their support for Mr. Larkin waver until the battle was over. If faults were found later, he said, there would be time enough to deal with them.

Mr. Lynch spoke about the findings of the Dublin Housing Commission, highlighting the appalling conditions exposed by the evidence. He advocated State aid for building new houses. Mr. John Good agreed, adding that there was no need to go to Dublin to find evidence of squalor and misery. He provided examples of hardship caused by overcrowding in dilapidated houses and mentioned a case where a landlord had increased a tenant's rent by threepence a week after the tenant had improved his home. Mr. Hawkins concurred, providing further examples to support these claims. He accused some members of the Corporation of having a vested interest in preventing the building of new houses, as they themselves owned many of the worst hovels.

He warned the working men not to be fooled by these individuals at the forthcoming elections but to support candidates who genuinely understood their needs. He lamented that some working men in Cork were a disgrace to

civilisation, willing to barter their principles for a quart of porter. Voters were told that if they did not vote for certain candidates, they would not get Home Rule — but, he said, the kind of Home Rule these people would deliver would be "a home up on the Douglas Road" (i.e., empty promises).

At a coinciding meeting of the fortnightly meeting of the Cork District Trades Council, Mr. Carey, President, presided, and the delegate representatives of the affiliated trades were present. The Secretary (Mr. Dennehy) reported that the Typographical Society had, over the past few weeks, been engaged in a wages movement, with negotiations ongoing to improve the conditions of the workmen. These negotiations had been conducted in a regular manner and strictly according to the rules of the Society.

As there had been alleged rumours circulating over the past week suggesting that a strike in the printing trade was imminent, Mr. Dennehy wished to make it publicly known that all questions at issue had now been settled satisfactorily. Of course, he said, there had existed an element in the city who would have been glad to see a strike in the printing trade. Judging from certain published reports, it seemed some people were intent on creating discontent and mischief. However, the Typographical Society decided to meet the employers, and there was no presentation of pistols at heads, no boasting or threats, but instead a clear, open, and straightforward exchange of arguments from both sides. As a result, the employers, gracefully and in a friendly spirit, made the concessions which had been sought. Apart altogether from the concessions themselves, the fact that they were made in such a spirit was of great importance to working people, as it maintained kindly relations between both sides. As a result of these negotiations, the jobbing printing trade in Co. Cork by this time stood foremost in Ireland — a most gratifying and creditable achievement, he claimed. It was creditable to both the employers and the workmen, he asserted, that the negotiations had been conducted so properly. Furthermore, a conference was also held regarding newspaper printers. The proprietors met the Society's representatives in the same friendly way, resulting in further concessions — notably, an improvement in wages for certain

staff members, and reduced hours for the night staff. Additionally, members of the printing staff with twelve months' standing would now receive one week's paid holiday annually — a most important concession and a fine example for other employers. These concessions, he noted, were granted by two Co. Cork-based newspapers.

Mr. Dennehy lamented that '*The Cork Constitution*' remained a non-union paper, a fact often forgotten. '*The Constitution*,' he claimed, competed with fair firms, while disregarding the payment of proper trade union wages and conditions, even when seeking advertisement contracts from public boards. With the municipal elections approaching, Mr. Dennehy emphasised that tradesmen and workmen should ask candidates seeking their votes whether they were prepared to distinguish between non-union firms and recognised, fair firms. He urged fellow workingmen not to cast their votes for any electoral candidate who would support a non-union establishment. It was a matter of satisfaction, he added, that the Typographical Society was now the third affiliated body to the Council which had achieved both a wage advance and improved working conditions — a credit to the Council.

The Chairman remarked that it was most pleasing that the matters had been settled in such an amicable manner. He hoped other employers would follow this example. Strikes, he said, should always be a last resort; disputes should instead be settled through conference and open discussion. Strikes often only wasted energy, force, and money. Employers, he said, were wise to adopt this course of action rather than driving their men to desperation.

Mr. Ronayne said he was sure all present would have heard with regret of the death of the sister of their worthy Treasurer, Mr. Kennedy O'Callaghan. He proposed that the sympathy of the Council be extended to Mr. O'Callaghan in his bereavement. Mr. Hennessy seconded the motion, which was passed in silence. The meeting then concluded.[142]

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[142] *Cork Examiner 29/11/1913*

In December 1913, the '*Irish Worker*' paper reported that Cork United Trades had resolved that their candidates were to contest the forthcoming Municipal elections in the direct interests of Labour, and, since representation of Labour on the Corporation depended solely on the workers themselves, it was to be hoped that they would exercise their franchise to return their own trusted representatives. The political magazine made it clear that, then more than ever, Labour had needed to speak for itself—and through those who had earned the right to represent it.

Mr J. J. Purcell, of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, and Mr T. Walsh, President of the Cork United Trades and Labour Council, had stood in the North-West Ward on the Labour ticket. Both men were well known—within and beyond the ward—as trade unionists of advanced views, deeply committed to their class: the workers. In the magazine's opinion, their election ought to have been assured. The North-West Ward, being predominantly residential and working-class, deserved representation by men who had genuinely championed its interests. Mr J. J. Donovan, of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, had stood in the South Ward on behalf of Labour. The magazine had no doubt regarding his success. He was known as both a capable organiser and a committed trade unionist who had long served the movement with distinction.

However, it was with considerable regret that the publication noted that his fellow trade unionist, Mr P. Lynch—Organising Secretary of the Tailors' Society—had chosen to stand on the political ticket. It considered it disheartening—indeed remarkable—that a trade union official should have turned aside from the very workers by whom he had been employed and lent his time, energy, and experience to a political party rather than to Labour itself. The magazine also reported with dismay that Messrs M. Egan and P. Murphy had similarly abandoned the workers' interest and had contested the North-West Ward under the banner of party politics. The editorial regarded such decisions as deeply concerning.

Its advice to the electors of the North-West and South Wards had been clear: to remain vigilant and not be deceived by those place-hunters and renegades—men who had used the language of Labour merely to advance personal political ambitions. That Mr Lynch, Mr Egan, and Mr Murphy had often spoken in support of the workers at Trades Council meetings only further exposed the insincerity of their positions. Their decision to campaign under a political banner, the magazine argued, revealed where their true priorities lay. It had expressed the hope that the workers of the North-West and South Wards would teach them a lesson at the polls on the 16th of January—one they would come to regret for having betrayed trade union principles. The publication had urged members of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, especially in the North-West, to rise to the occasion and secure the return of their comrade Purcell—a candidate they could rightly feel proud of. Had he been elected, the editors were confident he would prove a steadfast and honourable representative of working-class interests among the City Fathers, in council assembled.[143]

In February 1914, at a meeting of the Cork United Trades and Labour Council, Mr Ormond (Vice-President) said that there was a matter of serious consequence to a great many which needed to be brought forward. At a meeting of the Technical Committee, it had been mentioned that an application had been made by the military authorities to admit soldiers to the classes. That, he stated, would be a very serious matter for the industrial welfare of Co. Cork and the country, for they already had instances of soldiers being brought into the Post Office and employed in work previously done by civilians.

When a soldier retired on pension after ten or twelve years, he often obtained a job in preference to civilians, and it was not fair that they should be trained at the public's expense to compete against other workers. Mr Ormond proposed that they request the Technical Committee not to admit soldiers as students. Mr Good seconded the resolution and, as a trade unionist, objected to soldiers being trained as handy men

[143] *The Irish Worker 6/12/1913*

when they left the service. He pointed out that the reason for the present move was that the recruiting sergeants were not getting enough recruits, and the authorities wanted to induce men to join by offering them the prospect of being handy men upon discharge. Furthermore, he urged them to consider the character of the boys and girls who attended the technical classes. While he admitted there were many decent men in the army, there were also many of the reverse kind, and he asked whether they were prepared to run the risk of allowing the latter to mix with their boys and girls in the technical classes.[144]

In February 1914, it was announced that the president of the Cork United Trades and Labour Council would be appointed to the Cork Technical Instruction Committee.[145]

Also in February, at a meeting of the Cork United Trades and Labour Council, Mr H. Ormond (Vice-President) presided. The following bodies were represented: the brewery workers, bakers, tailors, city Corporation employees, coachmakers, Irish Transport Workers, bootmakers, boot and shoe operatives, masons, bricklayers and paviors, carmen and storemen, Postmen's Federation, brushmakers, breadflour dryers, woodcutting machinists, harness-makers, builders' labourers, Irish drapers, caseworkers, National Union of Dockers (Passage Branch), and the National Union of Railwaymen, Nos. 1 and 2 Branches.

The Chairman noted that since their last meeting a very distinguished Churchman, the Very Rev. Canon McNamara, had passed away. The deceased clergyman was a kind, genial, and charitable gentleman, and one of the first people in Cork to forward the technical education movement in the city (hear, hear). He was certain that the workers deeply regretted his demise. Alderman Kelleher proposed that their deepest sympathy be tendered to the relatives of Canon McNamara in their sad bereavement. He stated that he had known the late Canon McNamara for thirty-six or thirty-seven years and

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[144] *Killarney Echo and South Kerry Chronicle 7/2/1914*

[145] *Cork Examiner 10/2/1914*

had always found him most courteous and genial to all classes of the community (hear, hear). In public life, Canon McNamara had taken a deep interest in the industrial classes, and it was right that the workers should express their regret at the death of such a true friend to their cause. Mr T. Hegarty seconded the motion, which was supported by Mr Leahy (Postmen's Federation) and passed in silence.

The Chairman further remarked that he noticed the Labour Party in England intended, in future, to contest every seat and to leave no stone unturned to win every seat. That was proper, he said, as the workers should have someone at the helm to look after their affairs. The Executive of the Cork United Trades had not lost sight of that matter, and had started an independent Labour Party some time ago. Although they had made a poor showing at the polls, they hoped the workers would realise what they would gain by having men of their own class representing them in municipal and Parliamentary life.

Mr Good agreed, stating that workers had for too long been dragged at the tail of politicians. They should attend to their own interests and make a real effort. In the King's Speech, Ulster had received a lot of attention — but what was Ulster? No one paid serious heed to their threats. However, there was no intention of paying attention to Dublin, South Africa, or Leith, or any other place where there was industrial upheaval, because the Labour Party was seen merely as the tail-end of another political party, just as the workers in Cork were viewed. They could not expect better unless the workers took their affairs into their own hands.

Mr. Good stated that in the report of the proceedings of the last meeting of the Cork District Trades Council, a statement was made which might lead the public to believe that members of the Cork District Trades Council were not those preventing the reunion of the two halls. In fact, the Cork United Trades and Labour Council had made strong efforts to bring about a reunion. There was not a member of their council who was not anxious to have the two bodies united, as the movement could not afford to have two bodies in the city. The complaint of the Cork District Trades Council was

that no man should be on the council representing a trade unless he worked at that trade. While that might be a good principle for skilled workers, it would not suit unskilled workers, as a man might be a railway worker one day and a builder's labourer the next. It would be unreasonable to expect the Cork United Trades and Labour Council to concede on that point. Moreover, if a man who had devoted his life to the cause opened a small shop employing a few hands, that did not make him any less a trades unionist. If he remained active in his society and was adopted as their delegate, it proved he still had their confidence and loyalty to the movement. There were also small employers among the other council's members, and if there were more such shops, they would be better able to deal with the larger combinations of employers they now faced. He concluded by inviting the Cork District Trades Council to come to their hall and let the majority of the trade and labour bodies decide the new constitution of the united council.

Alderman Kelleher said that he intended to take no notice of the matter, as it referred to him personally. He had been a trades unionist long before the person making the remark knew anything about the movement (hear, hear). He had done nothing wrong in twenty-nine years and still enjoyed the confidence of the Trades Unionists. Mr Banworth, Mr Leahy, and the Chairman supported these remarks, and the meeting ended.[146]

In a late February 1914 edition of the '*Irish Worker*,' a correspondent, identifying himself as "A Workman," wrote to the magazine expressing his view that there had been a pressing need for a co-operative store in the City of Cork. In his opinion, the prices of essential goods had become increasingly unaffordable for working-class people, rising steadily beyond the reach of ordinary families. Referring to coverage in '*The Irish Worker,*' the letter writer observed that Dublin had already benefitted from the establishment of such co-operative ventures, and he believed that Cork could follow suit if its workers became better organised. He suggested that with the right leadership, the necessary initiative could be

[146] *Cork Examiner 14/2/1914*

taken, noting his belief that the intelligence and, in all likelihood, the financial resources already existed within the community. In the same letter, the workman went on to praise the President of the Bradford Trades Council, who, he said, had provided both food and medical assistance for schoolchildren. He remarked on the number of boys and girls who were forced to attend school hungry, and expressed the opinion that no child could be expected to study effectively on an empty or craving stomach. This, he argued, was another example of what could be achieved through collective action and a sense of social responsibility.

The editor of the political magazine responded by noting that a co-operative store was, in fact, already operating on Great George's Street in Cork city. From the editor's point of view, the lack of public awareness about the store either suggested poor communication on the part of its organisers or indicated that the correspondent had not been especially observant. The editor also used the opportunity to make a broader political point: in his editorial opinion, the kind of social welfare measures praised by the letter writer—such as the provision of meals for schoolchildren—could have been implemented more widely across Ireland, were it not for what he described as the obstructionist behaviour of the so-called "patriots" of the Irish Parliamentary Party. The editor's reply clearly reflected a belief that the Irish Party had consistently stood in the way of effective reforms that would have materially benefited the working class.[147]

At a May 1914 Cork United Trades and Labour Council meeting, Mr T. Walsh (Chairman) presided, with delegates in attendance from the following affiliated bodies: brewery workers, bakers, tailors, masons, bricklayers and paviours, Corporation employees, carmen and storemen, coachmakers, Irish drapers, brush-makers, Postmen's Federation, Irish Transport Workers, boot and shoe operatives, bootmakers, gasworkers, builders' labourers, bread-van drivers, harness-makers, and the National Union of Railwaymen, Nos. 1 and 2 branches.

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[147] *The Irish Worker 28/2/1914*

Mr Kelleher referred to the action taken by the Executive Government in summoning the trades unionists who had spoken at a recent meeting in O'Connell Street, Dublin City. He congratulated the chairman on being present that night despite this. It was, he said, a very strange state of affairs when labour representatives were prosecuted for holding a meeting in O'Connell Street, while political meetings were freely permitted there. In his opinion, it showed clearly that, regardless of whether the Government was Tory or Liberal, it remained a government of the classes, with no sympathy for the working classes.

No wonder, he added, that overtaxation existed in the country when a policeman had to be sent from Dublin to Cork to serve a summons on the chairman simply for attending and speaking at a trade union meeting. This demonstrated that the workers could only depend upon themselves to secure their rights and liberties.

Mr M. Egan also spoke, stating that the Council should strongly protest against the action taken against the Labour men who spoke at the meeting. He stressed that the issue for which the meeting was called was a very serious one for the workingmen of Ireland. He acknowledged that in Belfast and the North of Ireland were regarded as some of the best exponents of the labour cause.[148]

At a July meeting of the Cork United Trades and Labour Council, Mr T. Walsh presided. The following bodies were represented: brewery workers, masons, bricklayers and paviours, Corporation employees, builders' labourers, bakers, tailors, Irish Transport Workers, Irish Drapers, coachmakers, the wood-cutting machinists, gas-workers, bootmakers, brushmakers, breadvan drivers, Postmen's Federation, harness-makers, carmen and the storemen, iron welders, Hairdressers and Barbers' Union, National Union of Railwaymen (Nos. 1 and 2 branches), National Union of Dockers (Passage branch), and farriers.

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[148] *Cork Examiner 23/5/1914*

The Chairman remarked that during the week a congress was being held in England to examine the causes and prevention of consumption (tuberculosis). One of the chief causes identified was poor and unsanitary housing. This, he said, was a matter with which members of the Council were all too familiar. There was no need to go outside their own town to see the disgraceful conditions in which many of the poor were living. Although many high-class politicians spoke at length on the matter, few made any real effort to improve the housing conditions of the working classes. If, however, the Imperial Parliament continued to take no action, perhaps a Home Rule Parliament in the near future might do something for them.

Mr Good noted that some time prior, at the annual meeting of the Irish Development Association, there had been a considerable discussion regarding the issue of Conciliation Boards, and it had been suggested that the Council should send delegates to discuss the matter. The Council had agreed to this suggestion and had so indicated, but since then they had heard nothing further. He felt it was time attention was drawn to the matter so that the Council could be informed of its current status. After some discussion, the matter ended there.

The Chairman then referred to the death of Mrs Daly, widow of the late Mr John Daly, who was formerly M.P. for the City of Cork. Mrs Daly, he said, had taken a prominent part in charitable activities, and it was only right that the unanimous sympathy of the Council should be extended to her bereaved family. This was unanimously agreed and passed by the Council.[149]

In August 1914, Mr Good, in proposing a resolution at the Cork United Trades and Labour Council condemning what had been dubbed as the "Dublin outrage," blamed:

> *"The old ascendancy stock, whose hand was traceable in it all — those who did not truly fear religious persecution under*

[149] *Cork Examiner 11/7/1914*

Home Rule, but used it as a cry to perpetuate their sway and keep the people as slaves and serfs in their own land."

That day, he said, was over, thank God, and the Irish people were fast coming into their own.[150]

In October 1914, Mr T. Walsh (chairman) presided at the Cork United Trades and Labour Council, and the usual bodies were represented.

Arising out of the reading of a letter from the Town Clerk regarding the approximate number of the unemployed in the city, the Chairman said that, as they saw from the letter, a relief committee had been formed. This was an exceptional time, and the Government was going to give special grants to relieve the unemployment caused by the war. They proposed to do so by providing grants in proportion to the number of unemployed. There was, as a matter of fact, a register now open in the City Hall, where all unemployed men, as well as women and girls, could register their names and addresses. He suggested that each society be specially written to and asked to furnish a list of its unemployed members. After some discussion, this was agreed to.

Mr Lynch referred to the kindness of the Clerk of the Union, Mr Cotter, in granting certificates free of charge to the wives of reservists, enabling them to obtain grants from the relief fund. He proposed that the thanks of the Council be extended to Mr Cotter. This was seconded by Mr C. Bullen, and the proposition was unanimously passed. Mr Good said that last week attention had been drawn to certain importations into the city, and again this week he was led to believe that the largest trade union house in the city had imported goods which could have been well made in Cork city. He mentioned the matter solely to draw attention to it, and he trusted that those responsible — and those aware of the importation, as well as the bodies most affected by it —

[150] *Irish Independent 1/8/1914*

would take the issue up and endeavour to stop it. It was about time that such a procedure was ended.[151]

In mid-October 1914, the '*Irish Worker*' magazine reported that builders' labourers in Cork had been compelled to declare a strike, which, in the writer's view, had been the only course of action left to them to draw public attention to the serious grievances they endured. According to the magazine's commentary, the workers had issued repeated and reasonable requests to the master builders for a response to their call for a living wage, but had been met with silence. The editorial tone suggested that only when the labourers demonstrated their resolve by withdrawing their labour did the so-called "masters" resort to the usual tactic of accusing the men of ingratitude.

The magazine took a particularly critical stance toward what it described as "slave-driving" employers, accusing them of believing that the supposed "honour and glory" of working under such conditions should be sufficient reward for the average labourer—food and wages being considered, it seemed, unnecessary luxuries. The editorial noted that tradesmen had seen increases in their pay in recent years, largely due to the rising cost of living, and these increases had been achieved without the need for industrial action. However, when labourers asked for similar treatment, they were forced into a strike simply to be heard.

The publication pointed out that the labourers in question were, unfortunately, unaffiliated with any union, which meant they faced a much more difficult struggle, lacking the institutional support to withstand the kind of "starvation tactics" frequently deployed by employers in such disputes. The editorial suggested that, had the men been members of the Transport Union, they would at least have had adequate support to sustain their effort. It expressed hope that a campaign would be initiated to organise these labourers properly, for the sake of their long-term welfare and collective strength.

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[151] *Cork Examiner 10/10/1914*

Turning to what it referred to as "The Flunkies' Hall," the magazine drew a contrast with what it described as the proud past of the Trades Hall—once a training ground for rationalist thinkers and radical activists. In its current state, however, the Hall had, in the magazine's view, fallen into a more compromised position. It recounted an incident in which two representatives of the Tailors' Society had publicly attacked Trades Council Secretary Jack Good for the supposed offence of wearing an Irish flag. The magazine expressed contempt for Paddy Lynch, who was reportedly outraged by Good's display of the national symbol, and also for Jerry Kelleher—described with derision as an Alderman "by the grace of Fitzy"—who supported Lynch in protesting the incident.

In the view of the magazine's editorial team, Lynch's loyalties lay with British imperialism, and his preference for the Union Jack was seen as aligning with the ideology of William O'Brien, a politician regularly denounced in the publication. Kelleher, meanwhile, was described as a "master tailor" and "unprincipled humbug." The magazine lamented the fact that the once fiercely patriotic Tailors' Society of Cork now seemed to include, or even promote, individuals whom it viewed as betraying both the Irish cause and the labour movement. The editorial concluded by reflecting critically on the broader question of how such individuals had managed to find their way onto the Trades Council at all, asking readers—particularly old-guard nationalists in Cork—to consider how far the city's institutions had drifted from their earlier ideals.[152]

At a March 1915 meeting of the Public Health Committee of Cork Corporation, the Executive Sanitary Officer reported that, as instructed at the previous meeting, he had contacted the Trade and Labour Councils, along with charitable institutions in the city, regarding the formation of a committee to provide meals for underprivileged children. He stated that he had received responses from the Cork District Trade and Labour Council, the Sick Poor Society

[152] *The Irish Worker 17/10/1914*

(South Parish), and the Consumers' League, all of whom had submitted the names of their appointed representatives.[153]

The historian Mark Cronin highlights the dynamics between working class organisations and civic figures in the city at this point in time. For example, Blackpool, being an old suburb of Cork City, had a lively village character in the years leading up to 1914, retaining strong rural features despite being a poor, working-class area. The renaming of the Spring Lane Band to the Roche's Guards Band offers insight into the nature of political relationships between the Irish Parliamentary Party, and the city's several working-class communities, such as Blackpool. The band adopted the new name in tribute to Augustine Roche, a prominent nationalist politician from Cork city, after he gifted them musical instruments during the 1911 election campaign. Ironically, the majority of Blackpool's male population, including members of the band, were disenfranchised due to the restrictive voting laws still in place at the time. Nevertheless, politicians like Roche could claim to represent the interests of all social classes, whether speaking at Cork Corporation, or in the House of Commons in central London. This situation reflected a form of "paternalistic democracy," where elected representatives — often from privileged backgrounds and financially independent enough to fund their political careers until the Parliament Act of 1911 — remained socially and economically distant from their constituents. This paternalism in Irish constitutional politics was often met with a corresponding deference from many working-class citizens, who tended to show respect towards figures of high social standing, including members of the clergy and affluent politicians. Community bands in Cork City typically represented specific neighbourhoods, and supported particular political candidates, possibly exerting influence over both the candidate and the wider political climate in the city. However, such deference was not absolute — bands

[153] *Cork Examiner 24/3/1915*

could, and sometimes did, shift their support to rival candidates.[154]

During this period, Tadgh/Timothy Barry, a psychiatric nurse and voluntary trade union organiser, who would become a city councillor and martyred IRA activist, increasingly recognised that organised labour was the crucial component of the impending revolution. Barry facilitated meetings for socialist trade union leaders, including James Larkin and James Connolly, in Cork City from 1914 to 1916.[155] [156]

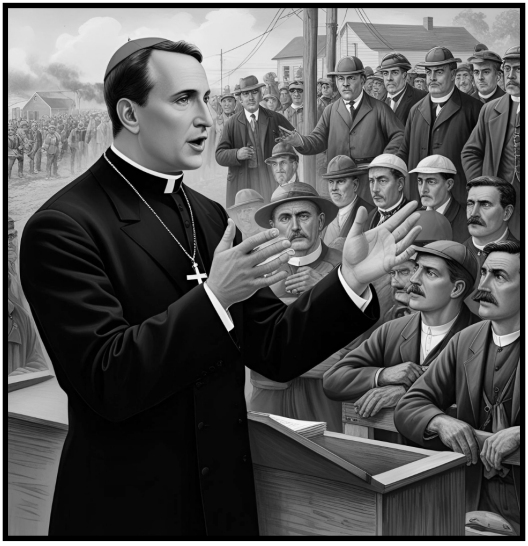
[154] *Cronin, M (2014). 'Blackpool to the Front: A Cork Suburb and Ireland's Great War 1914-1918.' The Collins Press*

[155] *O'Driscoll, Donal (2021). 'Tadhg Barry… "Always Keeps in the Background"' - Spirit of Mother Jones Festival*

[156] *O'Driscoll, Donal (2021). 'Utter Disloyalist.' Mercier Press*

A depiction of a workers' rally marching onto Washington St., Cork City centre.

For a period, organised workers in County Cork would find a friend in Winston Churchill, then a Liberal Cabinet Minister and First Lord of the Admiralty.



Roman Catholic priests were among those who promoted the organisation of workers in Co. Cork.

RISING VOICES
IN THE SHADOW OF THE YARDS, 1916-1920

In January 1916, it was reported that Mr P. Lynch was elected President of the Cork Trades Council, with Mr D. Kelly appointed as Vice-President. Mr J. O'Sullivan was selected as Treasurer, and Mr J. Good assumed the role of Secretary.[157]

In February 1916, Michael Austin, a former MP who had at one stage served as president of the Cork Trades Council and a member of the Royal Commission on Labour, passed away.[158]

In September 1916, at a meeting of the Cork United Trades and Labour Council, the President, Mr. T. Lynch, addressed the recent appointment of the Most Rev. Dr. Cohalan as Bishop of the Diocese. He remarked that no more popular choice could have been made, quoting the phrase "vox populi, vox Dei" to emphasise that the voice of the people reflected divine will. Bishop Cohalan, he stated, had endeared himself to the community during his time assisting the late Most Rev. Dr. O'Callaghan, and his elevation to this esteemed position had brought great joy to the citizens. Mr. Lynch noted that Bishop Cohalan had consistently shown support for the poor and had never hesitated to assist when good could be done for the people and the wider community. He proposed that the congratulations of the Council be formally extended to the Most Rev. Dr. Cohalan on his appointment, and that the resolution be beautifully engrossed and sent to him. This proposal was met with applause.

At another, coinciding meeting of the Cork District Trades and Labour Council, presided over by Mr. W. Hennessy, Mr. Kennedy O'Callaghan moved the following resolution:

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[157] *Irish Independent 29/1/1916*

[158] *Evening Telegraph 19/2/1916*

"That we join with our fellow-citizens in conveying our respectful congratulations to Dr. Cohalan on his appointment as Bishop of Cork, and sincerely trust he may be spared for many years to lead the ancient diocese of St. Finbarr."

Mr. Michael Cody seconded the motion, remarking on the considerable good Bishop Cohalan had accomplished since his arrival in the South Parish. He expressed the hope, shared by all present, that the Bishop would be long spared to fulfil the duties of the high office to which he had been appointed by the Holy Father. The Chairman affirmed that all present warmly supported the resolution, which was then put to the meeting and carried unanimously. Mr. Harty, also seconding, stated that the Most Rev. Dr. Cohalan truly understood the people and was well suited to such an exalted role, having demonstrated an interest in the affairs of the city and the welfare of both rich and poor alike, which was met with applause.

Mr. Good, the Hon. Secretary, added his support to the resolution, stating that words could not adequately express the veneration felt for Bishop Cohalan in the city he now led. He believed that while the Bishop had received many congratulations, the heartfelt message from the workers would be as meaningful to him as any other, if not more so, as some voices affirmed. Mr. Hayes also endorsed the resolution, which was also carried with enthusiastic acclamation.[159]

In October 1916, at a meeting of the Cork United Trades Council, it was reported that a satisfactory agreement had been reached concerning the proposed amalgamation with the District Trades Council.[160] In November 1916, at a meeting of the Young Ireland Society in Cork, Mr Dems Denehy, Secretary of the District Trades Council, explained that no meeting of his Council had taken place since he received the invitation to send delegates. He also announced that the Cork Trades Council and the United Trades and

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[159] *Cork Examiner 15/9/1916*

[160] *Irish Independent 13/10/1916*

Labour Bodies had now been successfully amalgamated. This announcement was met with applause from the assembled delegates.[161]

As we have seen so far, there seemed to have been differences, on occasion in priorities raised at such meetings between the two separate trade union bodies. As Eamonn Kirwan notes in '*The Threshold of a Newer Movement*,' two separate umbrella organisations would emerge between 1912 and 1916. The Cork District Trades Council reflected a lack of interest in electoral political issues, while the larger body, the Cork District Trades and Labour Council (CDTLC), represented a much larger group of unions composed of several craft, skilled, professional, and unskilled workers. It was the CDTLC that became the initial structure that led to the organisation of the future Irish Labour Party in the city. As noted in the book, and as we will see later in this text, this unified organisation would produce several future Oireachtas members, who served as delegates at various stages throughout the late 1910s and 1920s, such as Richard Anthony, Luke Duffy, Robert Day, James Hickey, Timothy Quill, and Cathal O'Shannon. Most of these individuals were affiliated to the IT&GWU.[162]

In December 1916, at a meeting of the Cork and District Trades Council, with Mr P. Lynch presiding, concerns were raised over growing agitation and discontent among numerous railwaymen, with more individuals becoming determined to take action. It was confirmed that strike notices were to be handed in on the upcoming Monday. Mr John Good, the Secretary, addressed the meeting by stating that a dispute had developed on the Great Southern and Western Railway. He felt it necessary to publicly inform those present of the unfolding situation. An application for a wage increase had been submitted by the engine-drivers and firemen, which the railway company refused. As a result, the workers issued a three-week notice. The Board of Trade had

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[161] Cork Examiner 7/11/1916

[162] Kirwan, Eamonn (2021) 'The Threshold of a Newer Movement.' Orla Kelly Publishing.

done little beyond formally acknowledging receipt of the application.

Mr Good further confirmed that the workers' executive had taken over the matter and that strike notices were currently being signed, due to be submitted on Monday, with effect the following Saturday night. He noted that the engine-drivers and firemen were fully organised and resolute in their intent to proceed with industrial action, determined to secure fair treatment and improved wages. He highlighted the difficult working conditions faced by these working men, and the disproportionately low pay they received. In light of rising living costs, he believed that their request for an additional six shillings per week was entirely reasonable.[163]

In June 1917, the '*Irish Independent*' reported that, due to the refusal of the Sinn Féin party, Mr O'Brien's party, and the Dublin and Cork Trades Councils to send delegates to the David Lloyd George's Irish Convention, the overall membership of the body was reduced from 101 to 91. The Belfast Trades Council at that stage had not yet convened to consider their position regarding representation, and it remained to be seen whether they would adopt the same stance as the Dublin and Cork Councils.[164]

In September 1917, Mr. Thomas Twomey, hon. Secretary of the Cork Trades Council, was unanimously appointed to fill a vacancy on Cork Corporation's Technical Instruction Committee to fill a vacancy caused by the retirement of Mr. John Good from that role.[165]

At a meeting of the National Executive of the Irish Trades Union Congress and Labour Party, held in the Library of the Trades Hall, Dublin, during October 1917, Mr William O'Brien presided as chairman. During the meeting, Mr Patrick Lynch of Cork proposed a resolution, seconded by

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[163] *Kerryman 16/12/1916*

[164] *Irish Independent 13/6/1917*

[165] *Cork Examiner 22/9/1917*

Mr W. J. McNulty of Derry, which was unanimously adopted with all members standing. The resolution expressed the Executive's heartfelt sympathy to the Rev. Father Thomas, O.S.F.C. (who had previously been appointed as Honorary President of the Cork Trades Council), and to the Rev. Father Laurence, O.S.F.C., Dublin, on the bereavement they suffered through the death of their brother.[166]

In January 1918, at a meeting of the Cork Trades Council, presided over by Mr M. Egan, T.C., there was a large attendance of delegates from affiliated bodies. A letter was read from Mr E. Sheehan, M.A., Honorary Secretary of the Child Welfare Committee, stating that the Trades Council was entitled to nominate two representatives to serve on the committee. In response, the Very Rev. Mr Thomas, O.S.F.C., and Mr P. Lynch had both been unanimously nominated.[167]

At a meeting of the Cork Trades Council in May of 1918, a resolution was put forward for adoption by the Cork Branch of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. The resolution expressed deep concern at the stance taken by the British Labour Party in supporting the Government's proposal to impose conscription on Ireland. It stated that such a matter should be left to the determination of the Irish people, and that actions of this nature only served to demonstrate how little trust Ireland could place in the controlling forces of amalgamated societies, whose futility was becoming increasingly evident. The resolution also strongly condemned the conduct of Mr. Barnes, particularly in light of the overwhelming majority opposed to military service as expressed through the aggregate ballot of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. The reversal of that decision had not, up to that point, been clearly explained, leading to a belief that there had been a compromise affecting the rights of small nations. The resolution concluded with a call for united action to uphold the standard of Ireland's noble heritage by

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[166] *Kilkenny People 13/10/1917*

[167] *Cork Examiner 13/4/1918*

every means available. It was agreed that the matter would be given priority on the agenda at the next meeting.[168]

In June 1918, A meeting of the Cork Trades Council, presided over by Alderman Kelleher, was held recently with a strong attendance of delegates. The Council addressed several key labour issues, including disputes, representation, and trade union recognition. A letter was read from the Asylum Workers, who requested that Council representatives attend the upcoming meeting of the Asylum Board to support their application for a bonus. The request was well received, and the Council indicated its willingness to assist. Mr. Thornton, representing the Boot and Shoe Operatives, reported a minor dispute in the shoe trade involving only a few non-union members. The Chairman expressed hope that the matter would be resolved swiftly and amicably.

Much of the meeting centred on the ongoing strike at Messrs. Guy. Mr. Twomey, the Council Secretary, had previously written to the firm requesting an interview, which was subsequently arranged. The firm reportedly refused a proposed 25% wage increase, although they agreed to several other demands. Notably, they declined to guarantee the return of the full staff who had gone on strike. While they expressed willingness to reinstate the workers "for the sake of peace" and to resume pre-February 1918 practices, the firm reserved the right to lay off any employees for whom work was unavailable due to business conditions.

Mr. Owens raised concerns over possible victimisation of union members, noting that the firm had already hired new staff, including relatives of company directors and outside workers. He emphasised the need for a principled resolution and warned that any settlement must protect the rights of existing employees. He stated his willingness to support continued strike action, even for an extended period, if it ensured a proper resolution based on trade union principles.

Chairman Kelleher remarked that the firm's response offered little real satisfaction. He stressed the importance of unity

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[168] *Evening Herald 24/5/1918*

and declared that the Council stood ready to offer full support to the Shop Assistants' Union. He stated that any new workers brought in during the strike must be removed before a settlement could be considered just.

Mr. Owens reiterated the need for clarity regarding any dismissals and said that if any occurred, the issue must be addressed immediately. Mr. Houlston echoed this sentiment and thanked the Council for its assistance in managing the recent public meeting at Passage. There was, however, controversy over letters published by Mr. O'Mahony and Mr. Murphy, which were perceived by some as divisive. Mr. Houlston claimed that Mr. O'Mahony had played a role in a past split within the movement, though he accepted Mr. Daly's defence of Mr. Murphy, whom he described as a staunch trade unionist who had been previously victimised. Mr. Houlston accepted this clarification and offered an apology. Mr. John Good, a railwayman, noted that he had been unable to attend the Passage meeting due to a prior engagement, but had intended to do so as a representative of several branches. He praised Mr. Maloney's participation and called for a vote on whether the Council's actions had been justified.

In the conclusion, Chairman Kelleher had clarified that Mr. O'Mahony had had no role in the previous 1909 split, and acknowledged Mr. Murphy's long-standing support of the growing trade union movement. However, he expressed disappointment that both men had rushed to print with their criticisms. He reaffirmed the Council's position that all trade unionists deserved recognition and that no individual should have claimed exclusive right to any position. He urged that the Cork Corporation Committee, which included the Lord Mayor, demand an explanation for what was seen as a slight to the trade union movement.[169]

A strike of dockers in Cork broke out during the Autumn of 1918. A telegram was received by Mr D. P. Buckley, assistant to the Director of Cross-Channel Transportation, from Mr H. S. Burgess, Irish Shipping and Coal Controller, warning

[169] *Cork Examiner 15/6/1918*

that unless work resumed in Cork without delay, he would be forced to withdraw the steamers allocated to the port. Burgess stressed that he could not allow Cork's traffic to be rerouted through other ports while vessels lay idle in Cork harbour. In a brief interview, Mr Buckley highlighted the significant challenges Mr Burgess had faced in securing steamers to replace those lost to torpedoes and mines. Burgess had worked tirelessly to ensure that the City of Cork Steam Packet Company and Cork's shipping industry received replacement vessels necessary to maintain the city's trade. With these ships now allocated, it was vital that they be utilised without delay. Any failure to act could result in the permanent diversion of these vessels to other ports, making it nearly impossible to recover them for Cork.

The urgency of resolving the strike on Cork's quays was becoming increasingly evident. The situation had worsened significantly. The strike posed a growing threat to the cattle, sheep, pig, and broader livestock industries. A developing shortage of key foodstuffs in Cork city and county was also directly attributed to the industrial action. There was widespread hope that employers and employees alike would recognise the importance of reaching an immediate settlement. The Lord Mayor received a letter from John Sutton, Secretary of the workers' committee. In the letter, Sutton acknowledged the Lord Mayor's communication regarding the strike and expressed gratitude for being informed about the potential redirection of shipping. He noted that the Lord Mayor, along with bishops, the Town Clerk, and other prominent local figures, had formed a committee aimed at resolving the dispute. A conference between employers and workers' representatives had been arranged to take place at City Hall. While the workers' delegation attended as planned, the employers failed to appear. The workers were informed by the Town Clerk that their presence was no longer necessary due to the employers' refusal to participate, which was supported by a letter from one of the companies. Given this, the workers believed they had made every reasonable effort to resolve the matter and placed responsibility for the ongoing impasse squarely on the employers. Sutton further noted that although the Harbour Board had since appointed a deputation—including its

chairman and the Lord Mayor—to meet with the Cork Trades Council to seek a settlement, no real progress could occur until the employers agreed to meet the workers' representatives.

The Clyde Shipping Company, in a response to a letter from the Lord Mayor's Secretary, reiterated that it saw no reason to amend its earlier communication to the Town Clerk. The company reaffirmed its willingness for the workers to return under terms outlined by the Ministry of Labour following arbitration—a process initiated at the request of the workers themselves. If any further issues arose after work resumed, these could be submitted through appropriate channels to the Ministry. The company rejected claims published in the local press that they had refused to negotiate with union officials. On the contrary, they had made a settlement proposal, which was delayed by the union and ultimately led to arbitration. The employers had agreed to arbitration promptly and now saw no further steps they could reasonably take. Following a decision by the Harbour Board, the Lord Mayor, Mr D. J. Lucy (Chairman of the Board), and Mr D. P. Buckley attended a meeting of the Cork Trade and Labour Council to discuss the escalating situation. They were received warmly by the assembled delegates.

Chairman Alderman J. Kelleher expressed hope that the visitors' presence would lead to a positive resolution. He said everyone regretted the dispute and wished for an amicable solution. He noted recent correspondence concerning the possible withdrawal of ships and emphasised that none of the workers on strike wished for the situation to persist. The goal was a fair agreement that would allow harmonious relations between employers and workers to be restored. The Council shared this objective and would gladly welcome a resolution. The Lord Mayor addressed the meeting, stating that he and his colleagues were present solely to help resolve a dispute that had already caused considerable damage. He believed an amicable solution was possible if both sides came together. He made a public appeal for dialogue, warning that each passing day widened the divide. Continued industrial action, he cautioned, would have serious implications not only for the workers but also for the port's commercial future. The

diversion of trade away from Cork would be a blow that no one wanted to see.

Mr Lucy supported the Lord Mayor's sentiments, describing the dispute as more serious than it might appear. He warned of the financial consequences already being felt. The port's growth had drawn attention from rival interests eager to attract its trade. Some business had already been lost, and the situation would worsen if the strike persisted. The Harbour Board had always sought to retain and expand Cork's maritime commerce, but the loss of income was now affecting operations. Dues from the Steam Packet Company had fallen dramatically, and during the strike, none had been received. With a wage bill of £600 per week, the Harbour Board faced a deficit for the first time in its history. Anticipated annual losses of £10,000 would require cutbacks, including potential staff reductions.

Alderman Kelleher criticised the shipping companies for refusing to meet with the civic deputation. He remarked that had the workers taken such a stance, they would have faced public condemnation. The port, he said, was vital to the workers and the city at large. The Dockers' Union remained ready to meet company directors at any time, accompanied by the Lord Mayor and Mr Lucy, to work towards a settlement. Mr Hickey, representing the Dockers' Union, stated that the workers' demands were modest and justified. They were willing to meet employers at any time to reach a fair agreement. Mr D. P. Buckley warned of the consequences if Cork were to lose the ships that had been so recently secured for the city.

Mr Houston suggested that Mr Burgess should directly manage the ships and pay the workers himself until the employers changed their stance. Several others, including Messrs Murphy (two), Egan, Breen, O'Mahony, and Good, spoke in support of the workers, criticising the companies for refusing to meet the deputation seeking a resolution. The Chairman concluded the meeting by announcing that the workers were prepared to meet with the companies' directors at any moment, along with the Lord Mayor and Mr Lucy, in

a renewed effort to resolve the dispute. The Lord Mayor, Mr Lucy, and Mr Buckley thanked the assembly and withdrew.

A meeting of the dock workers was also held to discuss the proposals from the Harbour Board and the Lord Mayor's correspondence regarding the situation on Cork's quays. The men unanimously agreed to leave the matter in the hands of their local union representatives, who remained ready to negotiate. They also agreed unanimously not to resume work until a satisfactory settlement had been reached.[170]

Also that month, the Cork Trades Council appointed a deputation to request that His Grace, Most Rev. Dr Coughlan, permit the local National Defence Committee to forward its quota of £5,000 to the Mansion House Conference in support of the national anti-conscription fund. It was stated that His Lordship had objected to the forwarding of this particular quota, but not to the general sending of funds.[171]

At the conclusion of the month, it was reported that in Londonderry, the dockers had also ceased work, prompting the cross-channel companies to suspend all sailings to the port. As the strike was not supported by the trade unions, the workers were not eligible for strike pay. It was understood that Sir George Askwith was dispatching a special commissioner to investigate the dispute. Messrs. Green and Co., corn merchants in Cork, reported that ships carrying wheat and flour had been diverted from the port. They expressed concern that this action was unjustified, as the strike did not involve grain workers. In response to a statement from the Cork Trades Council claiming that the dockers had not been offered the Waterson award rates, Mr. Lund, Chairman of the Harbour Board, stated that during the conference, Mr. Muirhead had indeed made the offer. However, according to him, Messrs. Sutton, McCartan, and Hickey had refused to accept it. Mr. Lund appealed to the men to honour the terms of the award and resume work in

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[170] *Cork Examiner 23/8/1918*

[171] *Irish Independent 26/8/1918*

order to save the City of Cork's port from economic ruin, assuring them that every effort would be made to seek a revision of the award if necessary.[172]

In September 1918, it was reported at a meeting of the Cork Trades Council that, following a deputation to the Most Rev. Dr. Cohalan, the disagreement regarding the remittance of ten percent of the National Defence Fund collection to the Mansion House Conference had been resolved. It was stated that the funds would likely be sent in the near future.[173]

At subsequent meetings that month, the President (Mr. P. Lynch) expressed a strong hope that both trade bodies and apprentices would offer their full support to the Technical School classes during the upcoming session. He regretted that attendance numbers had fallen short of expectations. He emphasised that the only path to producing efficient and capable workers was through proper technical education, and he urged apprentices and others involved to take this message seriously. Mr. Egan, supporting the President's remarks, noted with disappointment that the only under-attended class was the trades class. He stated that this situation needed to be addressed and expressed hope that apprentices across the various trades would participate in full strength in the coming term. Alderman Kelleher spoke about his recent visit to London with a deputation concerning the shipping dispute. He was keen to clarify that the dispute in Cork city had no connection with the diversion of grain ships from the port. He stated this with the authority of the Shipping Controller himself. The President added that rumours to the contrary were the work of scaremongers attempting to discredit working men. The matter was then closed. Mr. J. Nolan, representing the Typographical section, conveyed with deep regret the news of the death of the wife of their esteemed colleague, Mr. Denis Dennehy. He proposed a vote of sympathy be extended to Mr. Dennehy, along with an adjournment of the meeting as a mark of respect. The motion was seconded, and Alderman Kelleher, Councillor

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[172] *Irish Independent 31/8/1918*

[173] *Freemans Journal 6/9/1918*

Egan, and other delegates also expressed their condolences. The President, in formally passing the motion, shared his great personal sorrow at Mr. Dennehy's bereavement, acknowledging his consistent dedication as a committed trade unionist.[174]

At the next meeting, the President, Mr. P. Lynch, presided over a large gathering of representatives from affiliated bodies. A letter had been received from the National Executive of the Irish Labour Congress, drawing attention to the upcoming General Election and emphasising the importance of Trades Unionists preparing to support labour candidates. The letter outlined the necessary steps to obtain the sanction of the National Executive. A conference was proposed, with the National Executive offering full assistance to promote the candidatures of approved labour nominees. No motions were taken in the absence of the Press. Dr. Grimley, Head Master of Crawford Technical Institute, sent a letter expressing his impressions on the delegation's appeal to the Council to encourage better attendance at the trades classes. The Council agreed to support this request. The Chairman announced that a public meeting would be held at the City Hall under the auspices of the Trade and Labour Council, with the purpose of presenting before the Board of Education and the Government the Irish school teachers' appeal for greater justice. It was hoped that every trades unionist in County Cork would attend this meeting to demonstrate their strong solidarity with the men and women of the teachers' organisation in their efforts to improve working conditions. The Chairman trusted that the delegates present would bring the matter to the attention of their respective societies. Mr. Hoffman mentioned that a representative from the Ministry of Labour had recently visited Cork to arbitrate on the reasonable demands made by workers in the electrical department of the Cork Tramways. The Ministry appeared to be more concerned with the electrical department. At a previous meeting, the organisation expressed willingness to accept arbitration, but not to be bound by any decision, as the tramway men had refused arbitration and were compelled to take action to

[174] *Cork Examiner 21/9/1918*

secure their rights. It was anticipated that within fifteen days of that night, the tramway men would be out on the streets. Such action would mean the city could soon be without trams or trains unless some resolution occurred in the meantime.[175]

In October 1918, Lynch died tragically in the sinking of the *RMS Leinster*. A representative called upon the Very Rev. Fr. Thomas, O.S.F.C., immediately upon his return from the funeral, and asked him to share his impressions. Fr. Thomas replied that at that moment he was reluctant to fully express the depth of his feelings regarding the extraordinary honour paid that evening to the late Mr. Lynch. He was deeply moved, not only by his own sorrow at the loss but also by the grief he witnessed among the helpless orphans of the deceased, who had gathered in the graveyard. They knew that Mr. Lynch, a devoted friend of their late father, understood their profound mourning. Fr. Thomas, in his own words, was determined that Mr. Lynch's family would not suffer hardship by having their breadwinner taken from them; he vowed to make it his duty to support them as a replacement provider. He spoke of his close association with Mr. Lynch on many occasions, especially when Mr. Lynch was weighed down with anxiety for the peace and welfare of the city during those calamitous times. Fr. Thomas was proud to see that not only the official representatives of the citizens —the Lord Mayor, High Sheriff, and Corporation—but also the employers of Cork, had paid an official tribute to the late President of the Cork Trades Union Council. As a representative of the workers, Fr. Thomas said that he knew Mr. Lynch as a man who never compromised the interests of the working class. Yet, in negotiations with employers, he was known for his affability, sound advice, and intelligent grasp of industrial disputes. He demonstrated to capitalists that although his foremost duty was to improve the conditions of his fellow workers, he also had a genuine concern for the city's industrial development and balanced consideration for the interests of capital in commerce and industry. Labour had proven that no man in recent years had been a better or more effective representative of the workers in their

[175] *Cork Examiner 27/9/1918*

thousands. Fr. Thomas expressed confidence that the workers would do their part and hoped the bereaved wife and family of Mr. Lynch would not suffer. He was convinced that the citizens and employers of Cork would show through their actions that their attendance at the funeral was not mere empty sympathy but a heartfelt expression of respect. He was proud to call Mr. Lynch a friend, a man universally admired for his character and worth, and he intended to use every opportunity to honour the memory of the late President of Cork Trades.

At a meeting of the Cork Operative Bakers, on a motion by James F. Kennedy, it was unanimously agreed:

> "*That we tender our sincere sympathy and deepest regret to Mrs. Lynch and her family for the great loss they have sustained by the tragic death of her devoted husband. As President of the Trade and Labour Council, he was a true ornament to the trade union movement, a sincere friend, and in his public role brought credit and honour to his native city*."

At a general meeting of the Tramway Men's branch I.T.G.W.U., the following resolution was passed:

> "*That we, the members of the Tramway Men's Branch I.T.G.W.U., deeply sorrow the tragic death of Mr. Patrick Lynch, President of the Cork Trades Council, which occurred in the mail boat Leinster catastrophe during his mission to London to advocate for the just claims of the men of this branch before the Ministry of Labour. We tender to his bereaved wife and family our sincere sympathy in their inconsolable grief, and this meeting adjourns to express our profound regret at losing one of our best friends*."

At a specially convened meeting of the Cork Workmen's Prize Band, presided over by Mr. William McLarn, honorary president, and with a large attendance, it was unanimously resolved to tender their sincerest sympathy to the relatives of the late Mr. Patrick Lynch. They recognised that by his death the trade union movement had lost one of its greatest advocates. It was also decided, as a mark of respect, to cancel the afternoon and evening dances previously arranged.

At a special meeting of the Cork Branch of the Amalgamated Mechanics' Union, presided over by Mr. J. F. O'Mahony and seconded by Mr. E. Dargan, it was unanimously agreed to extend deepest sympathy to the relatives of the late Mr. Lynch in their sad bereavement.

At a special meeting of the Cork Branch of the National Union of Life Assurance Agents, the members unanimously adopted the following resolution:

> "*That we, the members of this union, express our deep sympathy and regret at the awful loss of our esteemed comrade and president, Mr. P. Lynch, and extend to his widow, family, and parents our condolences in their sorrow, praying that God grants them strength to bear their cross with patience and resignation to His divine will.*"

Mr. J. Cox wished to be associated with the expression of sympathy. The meeting then adjourned as a mark of respect.

At a special meeting of the James Connolly Memorial Band held at their rooms on Camden Quay, Cork City centre, the following resolution was passed in silence:

> "*That we, the members of the above band, tender our deepest sympathy to our fellow-bandsman Mr. Marty O'Sullivan in his bereavement through the death of his brother-in-law, the late Mr. Patrick Lynch.*"[176]

In November 1918, at a meeting of the Limerick United Trades and Labour Council, in addition to supporting a proposal to establish a co-operative store, the committee also agreed to subscribe to a testimonial in memory of Cork's trade union leader, Mr. P. Lynch, who had died in the *RMS Leinster* disaster.[177]

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[176] *Cork Examiner 14/10/1918*

[177] *Limerick Leader 18/11/1918*

In February 1919, the '*Workers Bulletin*' reported that a letter was received from men employed at the Passage West Docks, County Cork, enclosing a sum of £6 10s for the Belfast Strike Fund. The paper recorded its gratitude to "the working men of Cork for their generous subscription."[178]

In May 1919, a letter was read from a military body in the Cork area at the meeting of the Cork Trades Council. It stated that they were dissatisfied with being called upon to perform tradesmen's and civilians' work, and requested the Council's assistance. It was decided to send a strong protest to Headquarters.[179]

In August 1919, in connection with the strike of shop assistants and workers of two firms in the market town of Kanturk, North Cork, some persons making purchases of flour and feeding stuffs at one house found that the sacks had been ripped open. Cork Trades Council directed their President and Secretary to meet with the Gas Company with a view to resolving the dispute with employees who had given notice to cease work on Wednesday unless their demand for a minimum wage of £2 10s was granted.[180]

In November 1919, the President of the Workers Council, Mr. E. O'Mahony, presiding, received a deputation consisting of Messrs. Kelleher, Newton, Walsh, and Coyne, who were representing Cork motor drivers, and who waited on the Council to obtain its support in relation to the Motor Permit Order. Mr. Kelleher pointed out that the motor drivers had held a meeting in the City Hall on a previous night, but regretted to say that they did not meet as an organised body of workers. However, they met as a group of men with a common purpose, and he thought they made it sufficiently clear by a majority vote that they were not going to apply for any permit or photograph to drive motor cars. In view of that action, it struck him that their relationship with the

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[178] *Workers Bulletin 6/2/1919*

[179] *Killarney Echo and South Kerry Chronicle 24/5/1919*

[180] *Irish Independent 23/8/1919*

authorities in Ireland would not be regarded as very strong. They came to this matter as motor car drivers poorly equipped; they had not even a local habitation and a name because they had no organisation. They had no funds and no resources, but just a bit of fighting spirit, and they asked the Trades and Labour Council to give them their moral support in this crisis.

The other members of the deputation added that it was most unfair that their individual liberty and means of livelihood should be interfered with, and they were determined not to submit to the Order. Mr. O'Brien (engineer) said the Order meant a serious infringement on the rights of the individual. It would be a serious matter for the members of the trade to which he belonged and meant the displacement of a considerable number of men. The enforcement of the Order would give a policeman the right to determine whether a person was a fit man to drive a motor car. The Order came at a time, he said, when trade was recovering from the effects of the war. The motor trade had been severely hit during the war, and now this Order was going to kill it. The commercial and industrial interests of the country would suffer to a considerable extent if this harsh measure was put into operation. It was an infringement of public rights. Medical men were liable to have their motors held up at any moment and the lives of their patients imperilled. The members of the Engineers Society who were employed in the repair and maintenance of motor cars were as much concerned in this matter as the motor drivers, and he thought the Council should take action with the rest of Ireland and protest in the strongest manner against the enforcement of the Order. Mr. Hurley held that it was the bounden duty of the Trades Council to resist such a stupid and unnecessary restriction. Mr. John Good said the proposed restrictions affected every section of the community, rich and poor, and of every shade of politics. It was the business of trades bodies and the public generally to make the opposition successful.[181]

In January 1920, at the Cork Trades Council meeting, Mr. Harty drew attention to the importation into the city of

[181] *Evening Echo 28/11/1919*

cheap cloth, made under the self-measurement system. He wished to issue a warning to people not to encourage such imports. People, he claimed, might think they were getting value in such clothing, but the contrary was true; they were simply wasting their money and supporting parties who were paying the very lowest wages.[182] Also that month, the Labour delegation from Great Britain travelled from Cork to Limerick. The members expressed satisfaction with their stay in Cork, and stated that they had gained much insight into the political situation in the country while there. They were to depart for Dublin and would proceed to Belfast early during the following week. Mr. Clynes, although expected in Cork, had so far not joined the party. The previous evening, the following official statement was issued to the Press by the secretary to the delegation in Limerick:

> "*Last night in Cork, we met six representatives of the Cork Trades Council. The interview took place late in the evening, and the discussion was practically confined to the political situation. The Trades Council representatives put forward the demand for self-determination for Ireland, which carried with it the right to a free choice as to Ireland's future. This morning the delegation met the Cork branch of the Irish Unionist Alliance. The views expressed by this deputation coincided with those expressed by representatives of the association as a whole, which the mission met in Dublin*."[183]

At a subsequent meeting of the Cork Trades Council, a deputation from the Cork Branch of the Irish Automobile Drivers' and Mechanics' Union was received in connection with the Motor Permit strike. Mr. Slattery, I.A.D. and A.M.U., represented the Transport Workers in Cork and Dublin. They believed something should be done by the railwaymen regarding the petrol question. They appreciated all that the Trades Council had done and he assured them that the fight would be continued to the bitter end. Mr. J. Good of the NUR said that there was no lack of sympathy by the railwaymen towards the motor men. However, they

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[182] *Kerry Weekly Reporter 17/1/1920*

[183] *Irish Independent 24/1/1920*

had received no instructions from their headquarters and until such instructions were received, they could not take action. After further discussion, it was decided to communicate with the National Executive Trades Congress on the matter.[184]

An editorial by the '*Cork Examiner*' in February 1920 opined that the citizens of Cork may very appropriately congratulate themselves on the decision of the Very Rev. Father Thomas, O.S.F.C., to continue in his role as President of the local Conciliation Board. His decision, made in deference to the expressed wishes of both the representatives of the employers and the Cork Trades Council, had been widely welcomed. The newspaper, in its editorial stance, wished to acknowledge Father Thomas's invaluable contributions to the cause of industrial peace in Cork city. Over the past several years, he had played a crucial role in the amicable resolution of numerous disputes between employers and employees. In moments of tension, when the city's industrial harmony was under threat, Father Thomas was described as having consistently offered his time, energy, and moral leadership in pursuit of settlement. It was largely thanks to his efforts that the Conciliation Board was established in the first instance. Under his presidency, the Board had conferred significant benefits—not only directly to employers and workers—but also more broadly to the community at large, by helping to maintain stability and avoid serious industrial conflict. The newspaper recognised, in its view, that it was in no small part due to Father Thomas's influence, along with those who have served alongside him, that Cork city had remained notably free from major labour unrest. The paper believed it would have been a great loss had he declined to continue in this specific role. According to the paper, his willingness to remain as President was a matter of considerable reassurance to all those concerned with the welfare of the city's industrial life.[185] Also that month, the Rev. Fr. Thomas gave a lengthy

[184] *Evening Herald 31/1/1920*

[185] *Cork Examiner 5/2/1920*

address to the Cork Trades Council on the topic of profiteering.[186]

In March 1920, at a meeting of the Cork Trades Council, Mr. George Nason, President, presided. This convening was attended by a large number of representatives from the affiliated societies. In response to the receipt of numerous subscriptions in support of the brewery workers who were on strike in the city, the President stated that as long as the strike continued, the men would not suffer from any shortage of funds. The societies had been contributing very liberally and generously, and there was no need to single out any particular body for praise. While the Council remained open to conciliation, it was made clear that the breweries involved were not merely dealing with the brewery workers alone, but also with the full force of organised labour.

As trade unionists, the members were not opposed to a settlement of the strike; however, if the employers at the affected breweries had resolved not to pursue a settlement, then they would find themselves contending with the broader trade union movement, not just one group of workers. A delegate reported that the strike among cinema operators had been resolved and that the notices of industrial action had been withdrawn. A few remaining issues were yet to be finalised, but these were expected to be settled in the near future. Overall, matters were progressing well at that point in time. The President expressed his satisfaction upon hearing this update, noting that it was reassuring to know the city would not face another strike. He also observed that cinema operators in Cork City had relatively little to worry about, given the increasing number of cinemas expected to open in the city.[187]

In April 1920, at the meeting of the Cork Trades and Labour Council, Mr. George Nason, President, presided, and there was a representative attendance from the various affiliated bodies. A communication was read from the Executive of the

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[186] *Limerick Leader 11/2/1920*

[187] *Cork Examiner 6/3/1920*

Secondary Teachers, enclosing resolutions that had been adopted in relation to the Education Bill. These resolutions outlined the grievances under which teachers laboured, particularly in regard to salaries and related matters. Consideration of the resolutions was deferred for the time being, pending possible developments concerning the Education Bill.

During the reading of the minutes, reference was made to the ongoing strike by the clerical staff of the City of Cork Steam Packet Company. Mr. Mahony observed that the workers' strike had persisted for a considerable period. While he commended the excellent morale of the men on strike, he believed it was now appropriate to make a renewed effort to reach a settlement. He proposed that the matter be dealt with immediately by the Executive of the Trades Council, in conjunction with representatives of the Clerical Workers' Union, with the aim of bringing about a resolution. He believed that such a course of action would yield positive results for both the company and its employees. The motion was seconded and passed. The President then remarked that the clerical workers had conducted the strike with great discipline and resolve.[188]

Also that month, a statement was issued by the National Executive of the Irish Trades Union Congress and Labour Party to the effect that it had been decided that the General Strike would continue through Wednesday and remain in effect until called off by the Executive. It was asserted that it was incumbent on every citizen to assist in preserving order. All were reminded that this was a solemn protest, and lives depended on strict order and the maintenance of peace. No man or woman should give the military forces any pretext for violence. The demonstration, they claimed had made a significant impression on the world. Nothing should occur on our part to undermine that impact. It was signed by Thomas Farren and Tom Johnson, leaders of the ITUC.

The Secretary of the Cork Trades Council also received a telegram at 6 p.m. the previous evening:

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[188] *Cork Examiner 10/4/1920*

"Dublin, 5.30 p.m.

— Strike to continue over Wednesday, and until called off by the National Executive. No improvement in the condition of prisoners.

—T. Johnson."

Mr. Good, of the National Union of Railwaymen in Cork, received the following message:

"Strike still on; await further instructions from the National Executive tomorrow.

— Kenny, Hennessy."

A mass meeting of railway workers was held that night at the Grand Parade rooms, where it was unanimously agreed to continue the strike, in compliance with the National Executive's instructions.

A large meeting of delegates of the Cork Trades Council took place that night at the Trades Hall, Gratton Street. Mr. George Nason, President, presided. It was unanimously agreed that the general strike would continue on Wednesday, in accordance with instructions from the National Executive. An Emergency Committee was elected and immediately convened. The following decisions were made:

- Bakers were permitted to return to work.
- Bread delivery was allowed from bakeries to shops and to country districts; however, house-to-house delivery within the city was not permitted.

- Shops were allowed to open from 9 a.m. to 12 noon for the sale of essential foodstuffs.

The Emergency Committee was to remain in session throughout the day from 11 a.m. at the Trades Hall to

address any arising issues. A mass meeting of all workers was scheduled again for 3 p.m. the following day at the City.[189]

In May 1920, reporting on the ongoing County Cork farm worker strikes, '*The Watchword and Voice of Labour*' reported that the strike in the Doneraile village area had been settled at 36s and £3 H.B.. However, a union organiser remained "on the spot" in connection with strikes in the village of Castletownroche and the parish of Killavullen.[190]

Also in May 1920, at a meeting of the Cork Trades and Labour Council, Mr George Nason, President, presided. There was a large attendance of delegates from the various affiliated bodies. Mr Johnson, Acting Secretary of the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress, wrote under date of May 4th, stating that he had been directed by the National Executive to subsequently inform the Trades Council that the arrangements made by the butter trade to reduce the retail price of butter had been complied with. As a result, butter awaiting shipment was now to be handled and permitted to go through.

He added that within the next day or two, arrangements being finalised by the trade would be complete. Every shipper who agreed to allocate the proper proportion of butter to the Irish market at the agreed price would be issued with labels bearing a certificate number in red ink. These labels were to be affixed to every package intended for shipment. From Thursday onwards, no package was to be shipped unless it bore one of the official labels. However, butter received for shipment on Wednesday and Thursday could be shipped regardless of labelling. Starting Friday morning, 7th inst., it was to be ensured that every package shipped carried a label. Mr H. Willoughby stated that, as far as the railwaymen were concerned, the Executive's order would be carried out to the best of their ability.

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[189] *Cork Examiner 14/4/1920*

[190] *The Watchword and Voice of Labour 1/5/1920*

In late April 1920, '*The Watchword & Voice of Labour*' reported that a "crux" had been reached in ongoing negotiations regarding building trades workers in Cork City, , and a "stoppage" was deemed possible. A similar scenario had arisen with a long standing demand of the tramway employees. It additionally reported that store-men, drapers, porters and others were also pressing demands.[191]

Mr J. Aherne, speaking on behalf of the Irish Transport & General Workers' Union (IT&GWU), said that he would be at the docks, and would ensure that the labelling procedure was followed. The Chairman added that there were other matters requiring attention. He specifically referred to the issue of Irish meat being exported while butter remained restricted, and stated this required particular scrutiny by their leaders. He expressed confidence that, in time, all such issues would be resolved in a way that benefited the wider community. Mr Egan, of the Coopers' Society, was pleased to announce that an application made by the Society to their employers for a wage increase had been granted by Messrs. Murphy & Co., as well as by Beamish and Crawford. He thanked these firms for their support. Mr Egan also proposed a motion:

> *"That this Council, while supporting Irish industry generally, resolve to give preference to locally manufactured beer, whiskey, and mineral waters—industries upon which many thousands of our citizens depend for their livelihoods. Further, that copies of this resolution be printed and circulated to all affiliated bodies of the Council, to the two local breweries and the local distilleries, as well as to mineral water manufacturers, and be displayed by these bodies in prominent places."*

The motion was seconded by Mr Joyce and supported by Mr Jerry Kelleher, T.C., and was unanimously adopted. The Chairman then welcomed the recent successful outcomes of several trade negotiations. A deputation from the Cork Bakers' Society appeared before the Council, reporting that their strike remained unresolved. Mr Shanahan urged that bakers ensure bread being purchased was baked in union-

[191] *The Watchword and Voice of Labour 24/4/1920*

certified bakeries and not under non-union conditions. Mr Keegan supported this stance. Mr Cummins noted that while permission had been granted for certain firms to bake bread, there was concern about the surplus being created, suggesting it was being used against union efforts.

The Chairman remarked that although the master bakers had withdrawn their official recognition of the Council, he doubted they would persist for long and felt confident the matter would be resolved with limited resistance. Mr Walsh insisted that trade unionists should support businesses that respected fair wages and avoid those that undermined the strike efforts. A delegate mentioned the problem of "blackleg" workers handling flour during the strike. The Chairman acknowledged this was an unfortunate situation, especially as some areas were charging significantly inflated prices for bread. Mr Egan also addressed the recent settlement of a long-standing dispute in a local clothing factory, where workers had been on strike for five weeks. He urged workers not to support the sale or purchase of imported clothing manufactured outside Ireland.

Mr Forrest spoke on the attitude of the Cork Harbour Commissioners in relation to fair wage standards. It was agreed that the Council would communicate with the Secretary of the Harbour Board regarding this matter.[192]

The '*Voice of Labour*' reported on 8 May 1920 that, no doubt inspired by organised Irish Labour's recent success with workers' control during the butter and bacon embargo, the local branch of the Farmers' Union in Charleville, Co. Cork, attempted to replicate the approach during the previous week, and failed quite spectacularly, according to the paper. It was believed to have all began with a 'one-man' strike. When a worker's demand was not met, he allegedly walked off the job. In solidarity, local workers at the creamery refused to handle milk from the affected farm. In response, the Farmers' Union held a meeting and resolved to take over the operation of the creamery themselves. At first, everything seemed to be going smoothly. Yet, almost immediately, the engine

[192] *Evening Echo 7/5/1920*

malfunctioned. Undeterred, the farmers—having grown to over 100 strong and ready for action—sent for two mechanics from County Limerick. However, before the repairs could begin, Organiser McGrath arrived. He contacted Co. Limerick, had the mechanics withdrawn, and effectively put an end to the farmers' attempts at taking control of the creamery. Having been outmanoeuvred, the farmers were forced to realise that "workers' control" was allegedly impossible without the co-operation of the workers themselves. McGrath then addressed the original dispute, swiftly secured a wage increase for the worker in question, and, for the time being at least, peace was restored in Charleville.[193]

At a May 1920 Cork Trades and Labour Council meeting, Mr. George Nason (President) presided over a full gathering of delegates from all affiliated societies. The Cork Branch of the Irish Asylum Workers' and Mechanics' Union requested the Council's support for the local National Defence Committee's forthcoming meeting on the 31st instant, which would consider filling the vacant Steward position at the asylum. The asylum staff insisted that seniority and efficiency should govern promotions and that long-serving employees be advanced before any inexperienced external candidate. They threatened withdrawal of labour if the management pressed ahead with appointing a junior outsider. The Council agreed unanimously to send its President and Secretary as delegates to that meeting.

Mr. J. Murphy, a city councillor (T.C.), announced that the operatives' strike against the City Union Bakery had ended in full settlement. He praised the intervention of the Very Rev. Dr. Thomas, O.S.F.C., whose mediation had brought about the successful resolution. Mr. Bresnahan noted that the Union Bakery had yielded a profit of £1,200 under cooperative management—a testament to the strength of worker ownership. The President called this a remarkable demonstration of how cooperative enterprise could both serve the public and reward its workers. Mr. Edgar, representing the Cork Coal Workers' Society, reported that

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[193] *The Voice of Labour 8/5/1920*

his members' application for higher pay had been granted by both Murphy & Co. and Beamish & Crawford, following negotiations facilitated by the union. The Council applauded both firms for their willingness to meet the workers' legitimate demands.

It was noted that the strike among Cork's cinema operators had been settled and all notice periods withdrawn. Only minor contractual details remained to be finalised. A communication from the Secondary Teachers' Executive, enclosing their resolutions on the Education Bill and on teachers' salaries, was also read. The Council deferred consideration until further developments in the Bill.

Arising from the minutes, Mr. Mahony reminded the meeting that the strike among the City of Cork Steam Packet Company's clerical staff had lingered without settlement. He moved, and it was agreed, that the Trades Council Executive meet at once with representatives of the Clerical Workers' Union to seek an immediate resolution.

Mr. Keane (Asylum Workers) reaffirmed that they stood by their demand for internal promotion and were prepared to escalate action if necessary. The Council reiterated its commitment to support the asylum staff and confirmed that its President and Secretary would attend the National Defence Committee meeting. Delegates from the Cork Branch of the Irish Automobile Drivers and Mechanics' Union appealed for the support of railway workers in resisting plans to impose new petrol duties on motor-permit holders. Mr. O'Brien (Engineers' Society) characterised the proposed restriction as an infringement on individual liberty. The Council resolved to consult with the National Executive of the Irish Trades Union Congress on this issue.

Mr. Harty highlighted the influx of cheaply made cloth under a "self-measurement" system, cautioning citizens against purchasing such garments, which undermined local industry and supported employers who paid substandard wages. A directive from the National Executive instructed that only butter bearing an official red-ink label—issued to shippers who allocated the agreed proportion to Ireland at

the fixed price, was to be exported. Unlabelled butter could be shipped only on Wednesday and Thursday; from Friday onwards, all packages required a label. Representatives of the railwaymen and Transport Workers' Union assured the Council they would enforce the labelling requirement at the docks. In recognition of the vital role of the brewing and distilling industries and the thousands of workers they employed, the Council unanimously adopted the following resolution:

> *"That this Council, while supporting Irish industry generally, give preference to locally manufactured beer, whiskey, and mineral waters. Copies of this resolution shall be circulated to all affiliated bodies, the two local breweries, the distilleries, and mineral water manufacturers, and displayed in prominent places."*

Mr. O'Donnell (Secondary Teachers) reported no change since the Council's previous discussion of their dispute over the topic of the Birrell Grant and other related issues. Though the Council had earlier urged parents to withdraw their children from Christian Brothers' Schools in protest, few had done so. Faced with the possibility of extending their strike, the teachers proposed forming a joint subcommittee with the Trades Council to seek an amicable settlement while retaining the option of more drastic measures. This proposal was carried unanimously.

A deputation from the Irish Automobile Drivers and Mechanics' Union reiterated their objection to the Motor Permit Order, which judged a driver's fitness by police discretion. They requested the Council's support and cooperation. The Council agreed to liaise with the national body to press for the Order's repeal.

A concern was raised that some cinemas were sourcing flour from non-union bakeries during the bakers' strike. The Council instructed a letter be sent to the firms involved, reminding them that flour should be purchased only from union-run bakeries. Finally, delegates noted recent criticisms of the Cork Harbour Commissioners' stance on fair wage standards for dock labour. The Council resolved to write to

the Harbour Board Secretary, urging them to ensure non-union contractors did not undercut union wages.[194]

In June 1920, the '*Cork Examiner*' remarked that the public was glad to learn that the recent dispute in the Cork bakery trade had been settled, and that the delivery of bread would take place from that day. A special meeting of the Cork and District Trades and Labour Council, called in connection with the matter, was held the previous night. Representatives of the operative bakers and van drivers—the parties to the dispute—were present. After protracted consideration, the following resolution was proposed by Mr. McGrath of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, seconded by Mr. Kenneally, President of the same union, and passed:

> *"That the whole question be referred to the Dáil Éireann Court, work to be resumed without any conditions; all restrictions to be withdrawn immediately pending the decision of the Court."*

The Council added that they expected all parties to carry out the terms of the resolution loyally. In the event of any party failing to do so, they would leave the public, trades unionists, and the revolutionary Dáil Éireann to deal in a fitting manner with the supposed delinquents. The bakers arranged to start work that morning, and deliveries were expected to take place as usual during the afternoon.

The newspaper remarked that the officials of the Cork Trades Council were to be congratulated on the manner in which they brought the dispute to a conclusion, one which had inflicted a great deal of hardship on all, especially the poorer classes, and which had threatened to be of prolonged duration.[195]

In late June, it was reported that the situation created by the munitions strike steadily worsened, though it remained restricted to the C.S.W.R. and its southern branches. There

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[194] *Cork Examiner 28/5/1920*

[195] *Cork Examiner 2/6/1920*

was no connection between Cork and Limerick, nor between Cork and Waterford, and other important sections of the C.S.W.R. were approaching a state of paralysis. The crisis was about to assume very alarming proportions, according to a statement made by Mr. E. O'Mahony at the Cork Trades Council, though he emphasised that the situation was not out of hand. Dismissals were expected to increase as time went on, but he stated firmly that "under no conditions would men take the places of those dismissed." As a result of the curtailment of trains and cross-Channel traffic, a food shortage in Dublin was feared. It was reported that a large number of railwaymen had already been dismissed.[196]

On the topic of 'Rebel Cork' in July 1920, '*The Watchword & Voice of Labour*' opined that:

> "*The City of Cork has suffered terribly at the hands of the Occupation for a number of months past.*"

It referred to random attacks by the Royal Irish Constabulary and the sudden State assassination of the Rt. Hon. Lord Mayor, Tomás MacCurtain. The paper asserted that:

> "*Murder after murder has marked the record of the Occupation since, and, as usual, the victims are mostly men and women of the working class.*"[197]

At the close of July, '*The Watchword & Voice of Labour*' reported on the upcoming conference of the Irish Trades Union Congress, taking place in Cork City. Among the main motions listed for discussion included:

> "*This Congress, recognising that a constructive agricultural policy is essential to make possible an easy transition from capitalism to the new social order under a Gaelic state, and in order to assist in setting up a system of ownership to supplant the present one, which is based on confiscation, and is responsible for the highly wasteful methods of agriculture that*

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[196] *Irish Independent 26/6/1920*

[197] *The Watchword and Voice of Labour 24/7/1920*

retard production in Ireland, instructs its National Executive to prepare and issue a statement on a National Land Policy based upon public ownership of all land, taking into consideration systems built upon (a) Co-operative farming for small and mass production ; (b) the Agricultural Guild ; (c) the fusion of the Co-operative Organisation and Agricultural Guild ; (d) Direct ownership and cultivation by local and national public administrative bodies."

The majority of the motion had been submitted by the King's County Trades Council, with section (d) being added by the Irish Transport & General Workers' Union (IT&GWU). It is interesting to observe how those in the trade union movement saw the establishment of an Irish Republic as a prospective breakaway from a capitalist economy, which would be replaced by "the new social order under a Gaelic state."[198]

In early August 1920, the mystery surrounding a man whose dead body was found at the village of Drumcollogher, County Limerick, remained unsolved. However, further details added to the intrigue of the incident. The man had been blindfolded, and his hands were tied behind his back. He had been shot through the temple. There was nothing in his clothing that could assist in identifying him. An I.T.&G.W.U. membership card, issued by a Cork city-based branch, was found in his pocket, but it was believed that the card may have been part of a disguise. According to the special correspondent of the '*Evening News'* (London), reporting from Dublin, when the police opened the man's shirt, they discovered a piece of cardboard, measuring 11 inches by 3½ inches, hanging around his neck. Written on it in pencil, in large printed letters crafted with the care and precision of a sign-writer, was the single word: "Spy." The deceased was described as having long black hair. His clothing, rough hands, and general appearance were consistent with that of an ordinary tramp.[199]

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[198] *The Watchword and Voice of Labour 31/7/1920*

[199] *Liberator (Tralee) 5/8/1920*

The twenty-sixth annual Conference of the Irish Labour Party and Trades Union Congress was opened in August 1920 at the City Hall, Cork, under the presidency of Mr. T. Farren. He was supported by the Very Rev. Dr. Thomas, O.S.F.C., Honorary President of the Cork Trades; Mr. L. De Roiste, M.P.; Professor O'Rahilly, T.C.; Alderman T. Barry; Councillor B. M. Egan, T.C.; G. Nason (President, Cork Trades Council); M. Hayes (Secretary, Cork Trades Council); and G. Duncan (Secretary, Reception Committee).

Councillor Egan extended a civic welcome to the delegates. He was followed by Professor O'Rahilly, who said that when Ireland had its Republic, Labour would not have suffered in vain for its self-sacrifice. The time, he said, would come when the people would rid themselves of the super-capitalists of England, and then they would see what form of democratic Republic they could build. Ireland would be the one country in Europe to establish a genuine economic and political democracy. Alderman L. de Roiste declared that the Irish people were dominated by the spirit of democracy, the spirit of nationality, and the spirit of true religion. While guided by these, he said, they would also remain invincible and unconquerable. Rev. Dr. Thomas and Mr. Nason also endorsed the welcome.

The Lord Mayor, who had been detained on urgent business, arrived at this stage and was received with loud cheers. He said that a distinct bond of unity had been created among all Irishmen in their work for an Irish Republic, to which Labour organisations had materially contributed. When the Republic was not just formally proclaimed, as it was at that time, but firmly established, he believed that all, regardless of their differences, would unite in supporting a free Republic in Ireland.[200]

Later that month, a deputation from the Cork Trades Council had arrived in Dublin and entered into consultation with the National Executive of the Irish Labour Party and Trades Union Congress regarding the Cork hunger strikers. The Cork delegation attended a lengthy meeting of the

[200] *Skibbereen Eagle 7/8/1920*

Council Executive, and further consultations took place today. The Irish Labour Party maintained silence regarding the nature of their deliberations, and it was learned that no official statement was likely to be issued at that time.[201]

In accordance with the decision of the Cork and District Trades and Labour Council, Messrs. George Nason (President), James Harty (Vice-President), Michael Hayes (Secretary), and J. W. Kelly (Secretary of the National Union of Shop Assistants) visited the prison. They were admitted to the prison but were not permitted to see the prisoners. The members of the deputation pointed out to the Governor that they had been instructed by their Council to visit the men and report on their condition. However, the Governor stated that he had no authority to allow them to do so, without obtaining permission from the Under Secretary. He expressed regret that it was not within his power to comply with their wishes. The representatives of the trades then left, saying that they would communicate with the Under Secretary on the matter.[202]

In a commentary titled 'Cork Notes: Growth of the O.B.U. in the South,' the pro-revolutionary '*The Watchword and Voice of Labour*' asserted that the preceding six months had witnessed a huge and phenomenal development in general organisation in Cork, and it claimed that the ideal of the One Big Union (O.B.U.) was rapidly becoming a living and potent force. According to the article, the decisive break occurred following the Cork brewery workers' strike of March that year. It explained that these workers had previously been organised in a local sectional union, the weakness of which as a fighting body had been clearly demonstrated during the dispute. The paper stated that, immediately after the strike concluded, representations were made for their admission into the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (I.T.&G.W.U.), within which they subsequently became a well-organised section. The article further claimed that, following the brewery workers and "in proper industrial

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[201] *Evening Herald 20/8/1920*

[202] *Cork Examiner 11/9/1920*

sequence", the Cork branch of the Vintners' Assistants' Association sought and obtained entry into the union. As a result, the newspaper concluded that control of the drink trade, from manufacture to service over the bar, now lay within the O.B.U. ('One Big Union'). It then advanced a characteristically radical assertion that the next step would be "Soviet breweries and bars", which it described as the best antidote to adulteration and the dangers of "wood alcohol".

According to the paper, the adhesion of the gas workers represented the next significant advance. It noted that control of electric lighting and tramway services had long rested with the Transport Union, which it described as one of its most disciplined and well-organised sections. The decision of the gas workers to join was presented as further evidence of what the newspaper characterised as the brilliant progress of the O.B.U. in Cork. The article went on to claim that the surrounding county had begun to emulate the city's example. It reported that, at a meeting attended with Roman Catholic members at Passage West Dockyard, the first visible sign was seen of what it described as the "sweeping out" of older forms of organisation in Ireland. The dockers, it stated, unanimously agreed to transfer to the Transport Union, and a branch was immediately established. The paper further asserted that, following developments in Midleton and among smaller groups of workers, the entire port, including its dockyard and ship construction facilities, was now organised under one industrial authority. This achievement was presented as being of great strategic importance, consolidating control around the harbour under a single directorate.

While celebrating these gains, the newspaper expressed the hope that remaining small and localised sections of workers would abandon what it described as their aloofness and join the broader movement, thereby fully consolidating the position already achieved. It insisted that there was room and work for all within the industrial union. Having, in its view, largely completed the work of external organisation, the article argued that attention now needed to turn inward. It claimed that mass unionism placed the movement in a greatly strengthened position, but required careful attention

to internal structure. The newspaper asserted that the time was ripe for the delineation of national industrial departments and their subdivisions if the O.B.U. were to fulfil what it described as its historic mission: becoming the industrial framework of a future Workers' Republic.

The article then advanced a broader theoretical claim, asserting that power based on industrial control and rooted in the workshop would inevitably supersede political power based on territorial representation. It argued that old social systems only became decadent and ceased to function when a new order was already struggling for expression within them. According to the paper, when new social ideas reached a level incompatible with existing restraints, those restraints would be burst asunder in a social revolution. The O.B.U. was presented as this new social order, emerging in embryonic form within capitalist society and destined, upon reaching maturity, to shatter it and replace it with industrial councils administering society in the interests of humanity.

In its conclusion, the newspaper urged that nothing be allowed to obstruct industrial solidarity. It called for the destruction of all local and sectional barriers, which it claimed belonged to an employer-dominated past. Citing examples from Victoria, it advocated organisation by industry rather than craft. The paper concluded by asserting that the organised master class recognised no divisions among themselves except those they deliberately fostered within the working class. Against this, it called for workers to build their own "industrial battalions", reject the slogan of a "fair day's work for a fair day's wage", and instead demand the abolition of wage slavery and the right of workers, collectively, to enjoy the full product of their labour.[203]

The Cork and District Trades and Labour Council in late September adjourned its business as a protest against the continued imprisonment of the Lord Mayor, and the eleven other men on hunger strike in Cork Gaol. The President, Mr. George Nason, stated that no public body in Ireland should transact business until these men were liberated. The

[203] *The Watchword and Voice of Labour 21/8/1920*

adjournment was moved by Mr. Weldon and was agreed to unanimously.[204]

The '*Evening Echo*' reported in mid-October 1920 that at a public meeting in the town of Mallow, Mr. J. Barrett, Secretary of the Mallow branch of the Irish Transport & General Workers' Union (IT&GWU) received a letter from their trade union comrades in Co. Limerick. The letter read:

> *"Dear Comrade,*
>
> *Enclosed find cheque for £24 8s 0d subscribed by the creamery workers employed at Messrs Cleeve Bros., Lansdowne, Limerick towards the relief of their comrades in Mallow, who have been disemployed through the action of the "defenders of small nationalities." The distribution of this money is placed in your hands, knowing that you will exercise care to see that the most deserving cases get the benefit. Please receipt to Thomas Corbett, Sec. Creamery Workers I.T.G.W.U., 91 O'Connell Street, Limerick. You may expect a further substantial contribution from the Irish Clerical and Allied Workers' Union (Cleeves' section) next week. Please express sympathy of all workers at Lansdowne with their comrades in Mallow. We all trust and hope that very soon the reign of terror will be over, and Mallow rising from the ruins, enjoy a fresh era of prosperity under the Republic.*
>
> *Yours fraternally, Chas. A. Johnston."*[205]

In late October 1920, in accordance with the call issued by the National Executive of the Labour Party, the Cork Trades Council's Emergency Committee called on all workers to cease work on one Friday as a tribute to the late Lord Mayor Councillor Terence MacSwiney TD/MP, whose remains were due to arrive in Dublin. Shops distributing milk and bread were instructed to remain open until eleven o'clock, and essential train services were to operate as usual. All public houses, bars, clubs, and hotel bars were ordered to

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[204] *Cork Examiner 24/9/1920*

[205] *Evening Echo 15/10/1920*

remain closed for the entire day. Postal and telegraph services continued to operate as normal. Masses were celebrated in all city churches at 12 noon for the repose of the souls of the Lord Mayor and his comrades who had died. All workers were urged to attend these services. The Rosary was recited at the graveside in St. Finbarr's Cemetery at 8 p.m. All work was to resume on the subsequent Saturday as usual. Any further instructions were to be announced in the press.[206]

During the Burning of Cork on 11-12 December 1920, the Crown authorities (the RIC's 'Black and Tans') targeted the IT&GWU's hall, by raiding it, smashing it up, and destroying it by fire. It was then necessary for the union to move back to its old building on Oliver Plunkett Street.[207]

Meanwhile, in the context of organising female workers during this period, it may be worth mentioning that, following the outbreak of World War I, women were often employed in several munitions factories across Ireland. The histories of women and war, and impressions of changing identities in wartime were fundamentally influenced by the role of women in armaments factories. Women were compensated relatively well for their employment in the munitions industry. Working in munitions factories in Ireland or Great Britain allowed Irish women to earn substantially more than they could in the textile industry or domestic service. This was also particularly evident following the introduction of the British trade union, the National Federation of Women Workers (NFWW), in Ireland in 1918. In order to provide assistance to the munitions labourers, the NFWW established Irish branches in 1918. It functioned on a broader geographical scale than any previous women's union in Ireland, with branches in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Waterford, Wexford, and Londonderry. As a result of the NFWW's leadership, Irish female labourers were able to improve their pay and working conditions through numerous successful claims. The gender distribution of employees

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[206] *Evening Echo 28/10/1920*

[207] *McCarthy, K (2022). Journeys to a Free State: A New Connolly Hall. Cork Independent*

varies significantly among the various factories. For instance, the proportion of female employees in Galway was 78.3%, while in Waterford, it was only 49.5%. Efforts were made to guarantee a supply of qualified labourers from the local community for these factories. Consequently, a significant number of females were reportedly dispatched from Co. Waterford to the Gramophone Works in Hayes, near London, to receive training in order to be prepared to commence employment at the Waterford National Cartridge Factory. This phenomenon was also observed among female employees at the Cork shell factory and was foreseen for the Galway shell factory. Additionally, Irish women travelled to England to undergo training as ordnance inspectors in English munitions factories. Upon their return to Ireland, they served also as instructors.[208]

As previously referred to, the Mansion House Conference of 1918 garnered extensive backing amongst Cork workers' groups. On April 23 1918, Cumann na mBan played a prominent role in a rally opposing conscription, organised by the Cork District Trades and Labour Council.[209] This seems to highlight an apparent socialistic influence on the pending revolution.

As Padraig Yeates describes, few significant events in twentieth-century Irish history have garnered as little attention as the general strike against conscription, despite being the most successful exhibition of workers' political power during the revolutionary decade and offering the most compelling practical demonstration of widespread public dissent against British rule in that period. The suggestions presented by the Labour & trade union representatives to combat conscription were the most extensive and imaginative among all organisations engaged in the campaign. If implemented, they would have fundamentally altered the character of the independence movement. The success of

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[208] Walsh, F. 'Irish Female Munitions Workers during the First World War.' Saothar (2017)

[209] Gaughan, A (1980). Thomas Johnson, 1872-1963: First Leader of the Labour Party in Dáil Éireann. Kingdom Books

the inaugural general strike in Irish history exacerbated divisions within the Labour movement, highlighting the growing nationalist-oriented and predominantly Catholic working class in the 26 counties, in contrast to its long-established Protestant counterpart in Belfast and the surrounding areas, which aligned with Britain and the Empire. The dynamics of the conscription crisis rendered this breach both inevitable and irreversible when the Catholic Church chose to actively endorse opposition to the measure, leading to the formation of a pan-nationalist coalition that included constitutional and militant nationalists, as well as the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress (ILP&TUC).[210]

As a comprehensive history article by University College Cork (UCC) describes, during this turbulent period, the most powerful and consequential demonstration led by Cork's Labour movement did not focus on industrial disputes or workers' rights. Instead, it centred on the nationwide opposition to conscription, culminating in a mass walkout on 23 April 1918, following a call from the Irish Trade Union Congress. Cork city ground to a halt. As historian John Borgonovo described, the local labour movement took the lead: businesses shuttered, transportation ceased, pubs locked up, and port activity came to a standstill. Approximately 30,000 people took to the streets in what became the largest public demonstration in Cork's history. The conscription crisis further deepened the collaboration between Labour activists and Irish republicans in Cork. The accidental death of Trades Council president Patrick Lynch—who perished in the sinking of *HMS Leinster* on 10 October 1918—marked a turning point. His passing cleared the way for Éamonn O'Mahony, a known republican, to assume leadership of the council. This shift dealt a serious blow to the existing leadership, often disparaged by younger activists as the outdated 'old gang' linked to the All-for-Ireland League. The general election later that year revealed the extent to which republican ideology had infiltrated Cork's labour movement. The grassroots membership resisted the idea of running a Labour Party candidate, wary of splitting the nationalist vote.

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[210] *Yeats, P (2018). The 1918 General Strike against Conscription. RTÉ.*

Sinn Féin's candidate for Cork City, Liam de Róiste, noted a lack of strong class identity among the working class, expressing the opinion that most workers would prioritise culturally national independence, over socialist goals. O'Mahony confirmed this sentiment, remarking that there was broad opposition to pitting Labour against Sinn Féin. De Róiste predicted that such a contest would fracture the council entirely.

By the time of the local elections on 15 January 1920, the alliance between Sinn Féin and the labour movement had solidified. In a bid to weaken republican influence, the British Crown government introduced proportional representation for municipal contests. Nevertheless, Sinn Féin and the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (IT&GWU) presented a united front in Cork City (running on a joint-ticket), capturing 30 out of 49 council seats—a clear majority. Meanwhile, the Trades Council fielded a dozen Labour candidates across five wards, securing three positions.

The council's platform, while not particularly innovative, reflected a socially progressive agenda. It included commitments to school meals, medical services for children, scholarships, public works managed by direct labour, and fair wages for Corporation staff in line with union standards. Organised labour's transformation into a politically assertive force was again evident in its involvement in another major strike. On 13 April 1920, in protest against the imprisonment of republican hunger strikers at Mountjoy and Wormwood Scrubs, the Irish Trade Union Congress called for a national work stoppage. The strike endured for two days and was highly effective—Cork was again immobilised. The Cork Examiner reported that commercial life had completely shut down: trams and taxis disappeared, railway stations closed, ships remained unloaded, legal offices were deserted, and schools were shut. De Róiste later remarked that the strike's impact surpassed even the 1918 anti-conscription protest, noting that postal workers had also joined the action. Under the coordination of the Trades Council, a massive workers' assembly convened at City Hall, where president George Nason pledged unwavering support to the republican cause. The nationwide boycott persisted until 21 December 1920,

severely disrupting the British administration's ability to suppress the IRA campaign. Cork's trade union leadership played a pivotal role—raising funds and sustaining affected railway workers, funnelling between £300 and £400 weekly to Dublin, in order to support the wider resistance effort.

Though it had trailed bending the radical Irish Transport & General Workers' Union, the political climate of 1920 continued to radicalise the body of the Cork and District Trades Council, drawing it ever closer to the republican cause. In the closing months of the year, the fate of Lord Mayor Terence MacSwiney became the council's central concern. Arrested during a British military sweep of City Hall on 12 August, MacSwiney was taken to Brixton Prison in London, where he began a hunger strike immediately upon his incarceration. A week later, on 19 August, the Trades Council issued a forceful condemnation of his treatment:

> *"That we, the members of the Cork and District Trade and Labour Council, condemn in the strongest possible manner the inhuman treatment meted out to our Lord Mayor and other political prisoners at present confined in English and Irish goals; that we further condemn the action of the Government in deporting these prisoners to England as most inhuman and barbarous, seeing that they had been already several days without food, and were as a consequence unable even to stand, and we hereby pledge, on behalf of Labour here, our fullest support in bringing about their release."*

The council backed this statement with direct action. A one-hour stoppage was organised in solidarity with MacSwiney and fellow republican prisoners in Cork Gaol. Then, on 22 September, workers were again called off the job for an hour to allow them to attend a special mass in his honour. MacSwiney died after 74 days on hunger strike, passing away in Brixton on 25 October. The following day, the Trades Council held an emergency meeting and passed another unanimous resolution:

> *"That we, the members of the Cork and District Trade and Labour Council, extend to the Lady Mayoress, the brothers*

and sisters of the late Lord Mayor, his colleagues of the Corporation and his comrades of the Irish Volunteers, our deepest sympathy in the loss they have sustained; that we emphatically condemn the tyranny which has caused his untimely end in a foreign dungeon, and we call upon the workers of Cork to hold themselves in readiness for any call that may be issued to register this sympathy and show their appreciation of his great sacrifice for land and liberty."

On 29 October, the Council ordered a citywide work stoppage to mark his death. Union representatives and trades council delegates also joined the funeral procession days later, a visible testament to Labour's alignment with the national struggle. Through these repeated acts of defiance and mourning, Cork's Labour movement reaffirmed its identification with republicanism, becoming a core social aspect of the struggle This forged a deep emotional and ideological connection between workers and the nationalist cause, eclipsing any push to assert a distinct Labour identity in the public eye. To most, they had become one and the same. While Ireland was in the throes of political upheaval, industrial disputes were barely addressed by the council. Sessions were regularly suspended so members could register their protest against British rule, sidelining pressing labour concerns. This preoccupation left the council ill-prepared for the economic storm that was about to break. As 1920 drew to a close, the wartime boom collapsed. Ireland entered a severe recession. Employers, facing falling prices and slackening demand, launched a coordinated attack on wages. But this new battle—against local business owners rather than imperial forces—was not met with the same energy. The Cork Trades Council, so vocal on national politics, offered little in response to the assault on workers' livelihoods. MacSwiney's hunger strike continued to dominate the council's agenda into October. Another general stoppage was called on the 15th so that workers could attend a second commemorative mass. The employers, already growing impatient, began to retaliate. At the Ford plant, management had issued a stern warning: unauthorised absence would lead to dismissal. Workers, however, were unmoved. Edward Grace, the factory manager, responded by closing the plant

entirely until replacements could be found for the protesting employees.[211]

As contemporary articles discuss, it was the Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party that would ultimately devise what served as the social and economic basis for the Irish revolution and the IRA, though, this was seemingly watered-down at times by some other factions.[212] [213]

For example, in Ken Loach's Cannes Film Festival winning film, '*The Wind that Shakes the Barley*,' the train driver and a staunch trade unionist named 'Dan' (portrayed by Liam Cunningham) is a character said to be entirely missing from the previous depictions of the conflict in film. Dan is pivotal to Loach's plot line, as his successful refusal to transport Crown troops from a Co. Cork station convinces the main character, 'Damian' (played by Cillian Murphy) that resistance against the Crown is feasible.[214]

It is also noted how, by January 1920, there was much indication of consensus between Labour and Sinn Féin at the local level regarding the number of council candidates each should nominate. As mentioned, in Cork, the IT&GWU and Sinn Féin fully consolidated their political efforts, resulting in the formal Cork Trades Council nominating only three candidates.[215]

Also noted in labour history is that, by June 1920, the increasingly radical demonstrations and labour demands in certain regions had also caused a sensation in the local

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[211] *How the Cork Labour Movement Defined the Struggle for Irish Independence. UCC (2021).*

[212] *Labour, Gender and Class in the Struggle for Irish Independence. ICTU*

[213] *McLoughlin, K (2016). Ireland's Lost Revolution, The Working Class and the Struggle for Socialism.*

[214] *Hanley, D (2024). 'Imagining the Irish Revolution on Film.' OffScreen.com*

[215] *Desmond, B (2009). No Workers' Republic! Watchword*

community. In Charleville, County Cork, for example, a man had carried a "Red Flag," and also lead a three-hour demonstration to protest the dismissal of two workers. The demonstration was supported by individuals who came to their doors and shouted "*Up the Red Flag*."[216]

In October 1920, '*The Watchword & Voice of Labour*' published a detailed account of an inquiry undertaken by Cork Corporation into the cost of living in Cork City, an investigation presented as both a practical intervention in labour conditions and a landmark in Irish social research. The article framed the inquiry as a pioneering achievement which, it argued, should be imitated by municipal authorities throughout Ireland. Cork's initiative was placed in a longer tradition of radical social inquiry in the city, associated with figures such as Father O'Flynn and Terence MacSwiney, whose earlier pamphlets and publications had played an important role in the reorganisation of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union in the years 1917 and 1918. The inquiry was conducted by a Commission established by what the article described as the Sinn Féin-IT&GWU Republican controlled Corporation of Cork, with the specific purpose of determining a fair wage and an acceptable standard of living for municipal employees. Cork Corporation, presided over by Terence MacSwiney as Lord Mayor, was presented not merely as a local authority but as a republican institution operating under conditions of British military occupation. Particular emphasis was placed on the fact that MacSwiney, a member of the Commission, was imprisoned in Brixton Jail at the time of publication, and that his participation in such civic and social investigations formed part of the activities for which he had been prosecuted by the British authorities. The article thus positioned the inquiry as both a social and a political act.

The Commission's work sought to define, in concrete monetary terms, what constituted a minimum standard of living for a working-class family in Cork City. Rejecting the notion of bare subsistence, it aimed instead to calculate the income necessary to maintain life "in human conditions". To

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[216] *'Labour Strikes - June 1920' (Irish Newspaper Archives' Blog)*

this end, the Commission identified four essential components of working-class expenditure: a basic maintenance diet; additional food to supply the extra calories required by a manual worker and his family; allowances to cover ordinary household necessities such as clothing, rent, fuel and lighting; and a further allowance for incidental personal expenses, including education, church dues and modest personal consumption such as books or tobacco. On the basis of these categories, the Commission constructed a weekly family budget for a household of five persons. The cost of food formed the largest element, with separate calculations for the basic dietary and additional caloric needs. Household necessities and incidental expenses were then added, producing a total minimum weekly income of seventy shillings, or three pounds ten shillings. This sum was presented as the minimum money wage required in 1920 to sustain a working man, his wife and children in Cork City.

Considerable emphasis was placed on the methods by which this conclusion was reached. The Commission stressed its intention to proceed without bias or preconception, adopting what it described as recognised methods of economic science. Its approach was modelled on the English Board of Trade's cost-of-living inquiry of 1914, but adapted to Irish conditions. Rather than relying solely on existing statistics, which largely reflected consumption patterns in Britain, the Commission collected detailed family budgets from workers across the electoral areas of Cork City. These were then compared with dietaries used by Public Boards and with nutritional standards accepted by scientific authorities. The collection of evidence was carried out by voluntary investigators, including trade union members and clergy, and no paid staff were employed.

Food expenditure was treated as particularly amenable to precise measurement, since it could be assessed in terms of quantities consumed each week. Retail prices were cross-checked against official price data held by the Corporation, and the Commission reported that no inconsistencies emerged from this examination. On the basis of this comparison, it concluded that the dietaries used by Public Boards, when properly assessed, corresponded closely with

the actual consumption patterns revealed in the workers' budgets, and could therefore be accepted as a sound scientific basis for calculation.

The Commission acknowledged greater difficulties in estimating the cost of clothing and footwear, as these items were purchased irregularly and were not easily reduced to weekly figures. Instead of relying on household estimates, which it regarded as speculative, the Commission compared pre-war and post-war prices and quality. It found that the cost of clothing and boots had increased dramatically since before the First World War, while quality and durability had declined. Boots that had cost fourteen shillings before the war now cost approximately forty-two shillings, yet were made of inferior materials and wore out more quickly. Similar deterioration was observed in textiles, where prices had risen sharply despite reductions in weight and quality. While these changes raised broader social and economic questions, the Commission confined itself to assessing their impact on the cost of living.

In its formal finding, the Commission declared that seventy shillings per week represented the minimum income necessary for the maintenance of a working-class family in Cork City. It emphasised that this figure was not fixed, but should rise or fall in accordance with changes in retail prices. Any adjustment, it argued, should be made by the existing Commission or a similarly constituted body, rather than imposed arbitrarily. Food and household costs were to be recalculated in line with current prices, while the allowance for incidental personal expenses was to be related to the net profits of industry, in proportions to be determined by the Commission. This recommendation explicitly linked workers' living standards to the broader performance of the economy.
A separate addendum, signed by Professor Wibberley, drew attention to the wider structural causes of high living costs in Ireland. It noted that only eleven per cent of Ireland's twenty million acres were under tillage, and that the area devoted to crops had declined by four hundred thousand acres between 1918 and 1919, particularly in cereals and potatoes. Without a significant expansion of tillage and greater effort by rural

workers, he argued, any lasting reduction in the cost of living would be impossible.

As presented in '*The Watchword & Voice of Labour*,' the Cork cost-of-living inquiry was both an exercise in municipal social science and a declaration of political intent. It asserted the right of workers to a standard of living defined by dignity rather than subsistence, challenged prevailing assumptions about wages and prices, and demonstrated how local government under revolutionary conditions could be mobilised in the service of labour and social reform.[217]

In November 1920, '*The Watchword & Voice of Labour*' presented a solemn but hopeful report on the central London funeral of the Rt. Hon. Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney, elected on the Republican-Irish Transport & General Workers' Union slate. It remarked that:

> "*Terence MacSwiney's was the first Republican funeral that ever passed through the very centre of world imperialism and world capitalism*."

The report framed the funeral cortege of the martyred Terence MacSwiney as the first to defy Imperial capitalism.[218]

The following week, '*The Watchword of Labour*' reported that the Cork City Branch of the Irish Transport & General Workers' Union had made a beautiful wreath decorated with the Republican and Workers' flags, used in the funeral of Lord Mayor Terence MacSwiney, who was regarded as "a sincere friend of the union." The wreath was carried by four schoolboys from local Christian Brothers' schools, and it bore the following inscription:

> "**From Cork Branch IT&GWU to their Dead Lord Mayor**

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[217] *The Watchword & Voice of Labour 2/10/1920*

[218] *The Watchword & Voice of Labour 6/11/1920*

We who saw Connolly fall and watch the fruit,
He nourished growing richer for his blood,
Know this sad sacrifice too will yet recruit,
And against material vanities quick will flood;
The brave young hearts who follow in the truth,
That sacrifice alone will yet attain,
The goal for which Tomás and Terry died;
And Irish workers seeking not self gain,
Will follow in their footsteps and in their pride,
Beidh Éire fós ag cáit ni duibhir."[219]

It is worthwhile to point out that Terence MacSwiney was also friendly with the sisters Sheila and Nora Wallace. The sisters, who were shopkeepers at 13 Brunswick St. (later 4 Augustine St. They were involved in running a branch of the Irish Citizen's Army in Cork City. This branch would later become absorbed into the IRA. In January 1916, James Connolly visited the Wallace sisters on his journey to Co. Cork, subsequently discussing paramilitary strategies in a meeting hosted by Tadhg Barry. Their shop was a hive of Republican activity, and one of the last activities of the Lord Mayor of Cork, Tomás MacCurtain, was to visit the Wallace store late on the night of Friday, March 19, 1920. Florence O'Donoghue, the former chief of intelligence in the I.R.A, subsequently stated that Tomás departed the store with the newly elected Alderman, Tadhg Barry, about 11:00 pm that night on what would be his last voyage. A few hours later, the Lord Mayor of Cork was assassinated in his bed by the Royal Irish Constabulary (R.I.C) in the family rooms above his business, at 40 Thomas Davis Street in Blackpool.

There is a family account how MacCurtain's successor as the Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney, who was also a regular caller to the Wallace's shop, went behind the counter and even sold a newspaper and a packet of cigarettes to a customer shortly before his arrest in August 1920. The Wallace sisters were busy at the particular time, taking dispatches around the city. Muriel MacSwiney, his wife, in her December 1951 deposition to the Bureau of Military History mentions how early on she became aware of "a little

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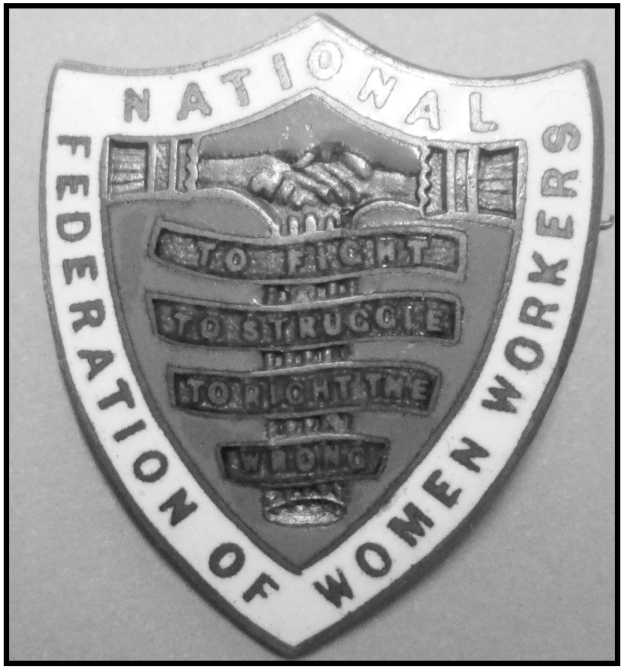
[219] *The Watchword of Labour 13/11/1920*

newspaper shop kept by the Misses Wallace, who were later connected to The Citizen Army". Sheila and Nora both worked in the shop and lived overhead at the time and the room to the rear of the shop was regularly used for Irish Volunteer and I.R.A. Brigade meetings. Sheila held the formal rank of Staff Officer as Brigade Communications officer.

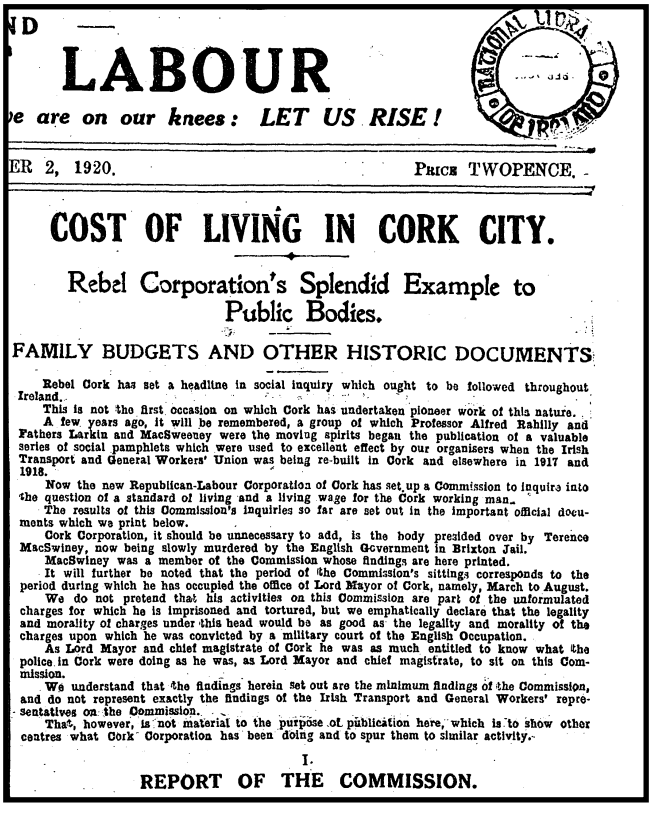
They had established a youth and women's Citizen Army in Cork that lasted until 1921 and participated in local parades associated with the labour movement at that time. The notable Labour Party organiser and socialist Cathal O'Shannon resided above their business for a time while employed in Cork.[220]

[220] *'The Extraordinary Wallace Sisters' (2016). The Spirit of Mother Jones Festival.*



The Great Britain-based National Federation of Women Workers was active in the Cork region during the 1910s.

Traditional symbol of the IT&GWU.



ND —

LABOUR

e are on our knees: LET US RISE!

ER 2, 1920. PRICE TWOPENCE.

COST OF LIVING IN CORK CITY.

Rebel Corporation's Splendid Example to Public Bodies.

FAMILY BUDGETS AND OTHER HISTORIC DOCUMENTS

Rebel Cork has set a headline in social inquiry which ought to be followed throughout Ireland.

This is not the first occasion on which Cork has undertaken pioneer work of this nature.

A few years ago, it will be remembered, a group of which Professor Alfred Rahilly and Fathers Larkin and MacSweeney were the moving spirits began the publication of a valuable series of social pamphlets which were used to excellent effect by our organisers when the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union was being re-built in Cork and elsewhere in 1917 and 1918.

Now the new Republican-Labour Corporation of Cork has set up a Commission to inquire into the question of a standard of living and a living wage for the Cork working man.

The results of this Commission's inquiries so far are set out in the important official documents which we print below.

Cork Corporation, it should be unnecessary to add, is the body presided over by Terence MacSwiney, now being slowly murdered by the English Government in Brixton Jail.

MacSwiney was a member of the Commission whose findings are here printed.

It will further be noted that the period of the Commission's sittings corresponds to the period during which he has occupied the office of Lord Mayor of Cork, namely, March to August.

We do not pretend that his activities on this Commission are part of the unformulated charges for which he is imprisoned and tortured, but we emphatically declare that the legality and morality of charges under this head would be as good as the legality and morality of the charges upon which he was convicted by a military court of the English Occupation.

As Lord Mayor and chief magistrate of Cork he was as much entitled to know what the police in Cork were doing as he was, as Lord Mayor and chief magistrate, to sit on this Commission.

We understand that the findings herein set out are the minimum findings of the Commission, and do not represent exactly the findings of the Irish Transport and General Workers' representatives on the Commission.

That, however, is not material to the purpose of publication here, which is to show other centres what Cork Corporation has been doing and to spur them to similar activity.

I.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION.

Under the leadership of Terence MacSwiney, the joint Republican-IT&GWU slate, which won control of Cork Corporation in 1920, would initiate a historically progressive local government programme aimed at improving the lives of the City's working-class, in line with Republican values.

Terence MacSwiney, regarded as "a sincere friend" of the IT&GWU, would remark in '*The Principles of Freedom*' that "the capitalist has no country."

The sisters Sheila and Nora Wallace established a Youth and Women's Citizen's Army in Cork City, and were involved in the Cork branch of the Irish Citizens' Army, later absorbed into the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

A NEW STATE OF PLAY, 1921-1926

In January 1921, the tram service in the city was suspended for several hours to allow the organised workers to attend a meeting of their Association, which was held in the Mechanics' Hall. After the meeting concluded, tram operations resumed as normal. The meeting had been convened to consider a reply received from the company in response to a demand made by the workers several months earlier. The final reply indicated that the company could not agree to the demand. The meeting was attended by the Deputy Lord Mayor, Mr. B. M. Egan, and Mr. George Nason, President of the Cork Trades Council. A very large number of the company's employees were present, including motormen, conductors, and staff from the permanent way, Power House, and Boiler House departments. Following a lengthy discussion, it was understood that the meeting had unanimously decided to submit strike notices, which would take effect at midday on the following Saturday. This decision meant that the city's tram service—as well as its electric light and power supply—would be cut off unless an agreement was reached in the meantime.[221]

In May 1921, Mr. George Nason presided over the meeting of the Cork Trades Council, which was attended by a fairly large number of delegates. The Chairman began by referring to the recent death of Mr. John Nolan, an esteemed and long-serving member of the Council. A vote of sympathy was passed unanimously to Mr. Nolan's family. The proposer described him as a dedicated trade unionist and a Freeman of Cork, a title also held by his father. Several delegates spoke in support of the motion, each paying tribute to Mr. Nolan's contributions to the trade union movement. Mr. Cody then raised concerns about the growing trend of printing work being sent out of Cork. He stated that such work could be done locally at the same price, or even more cheaply, and

[221] *Cork Examiner 17/1/1921*

criticised the practice, arguing that those who expected local support should, in turn, support local labour. Mr. Donovan added that he had heard that one firm had placed a £1,000 order for bags outside of Cork. The Chairman strongly condemned this "miserable practice," declaring that it must stop. He warned that trade unionists might be forced to take drastic action if such outsourcing continued, emphasising that Cork already faced enough economic difficulty without exporting jobs. Mr. Cody also raised another issue related to the printing trade. He pointed out that while there was ample opportunity to produce literature in Ireland, English newspapers were still being read openly in the streets of Cork —even by trade unionists. He criticised this behaviour, noting that many of these papers were opposed to Irish interests. He concluded by urging people to reflect on their choices and examine their consciences in regard to the matter.[222] Later that month, the Cork and District Trades Council, which met, adjourned its business as a mark of respect for the memory of the Rev. Fr. James O'Callaghan. The President, Mr. George Nason, in calling on a delegate to propose a vote of sympathy with the relatives, said that the death of such a well-known and popular clergyman would be sad under any circumstances, but was particularly tragic given the manner in which it had occurred. Mr. O'Connor moved that the sympathy of the Council be extended to the relatives, and he spoke movingly of Father O'Callaghan's qualities as both a priest and an Irishman. Mr. Durry seconded the vote, stating that the Council should adjourn without conducting any further business, as other organisations had done. Mr. Weldon also supported the motion. The vote was passed unanimously, and the meeting was then adjourned.[223]

In July 1921, At the meeting of the Cork District Trades and Labour Council, Mr. G. Nason, President, presided. A deputation from the Cork Corporation appeared before the meeting to seek the co-operation and influence of the Trades Council in advancing the reconstruction and rebuilding of Cork. The deputation was headed by the Acting Deputy

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[222] *Evening Echo 6/5/1921*

[223] *Cork Examiner 20/5/1921*

Lord Mayor, Councillor French, who received a warm welcome. The President stated that the deputation had come before the meeting on a matter of great significance to the citizens, especially the working classes. It was a subject of vital importance, and he was confident the Council would be eager to hear what Councillor French had to say.

Mr. John Weldon (Carpenters) extended a heartfelt "céad míle fáilte" to Councillor French as the city's first citizen. He noted that since Councillor French had assumed the responsibilities of the Municipal chair, every endeavour he undertook had been successfully carried out. Mr. Weldon expressed hope that the turbulent times faced by Councillor French and his colleagues were now over and that they would soon enjoy the benefits of a brighter future for the country. Councillor French thanked the members of the Trades Council for their cordial reception. He explained that, at present, there was a kind of deadlock regarding the reconstruction of Patrick Street. As the matter affected not only the citizens but also trade unionists and labour more broadly—particularly with high unemployment in the city—he felt urgent action was needed to secure work for those currently idle.

The Reconstruction Committee had already agreed on a layout between Winthrop Street and the Victoria Hotel (or Messrs. Forrest's premises). However, one property owner was refusing to cooperate, and Councillor French criticised this as a tardy attitude. This proprietor would not agree to round off the street, but French asserted that the Corporation would deal firmly with any obstruction. He believed that, with the Trades Council's support, this individual could be persuaded to comply with the committee's decision. The President and several delegates pledged their full support for the reconstruction plans that were being prepared. Mr. Murphy, on behalf of the Transport Workers' Union, also promised the full cooperation of his organisation. Councillor French expressed his gratitude for the Council's support, and the deputation then withdrew.

The Secretary next reported that the Blackpool Flour Mills were expected to be back in full operation soon. The

management had expressed a hope that their products would receive more consistent local support than they had previously. He also raised the issue of the late Saturday trading hours maintained by many shops in the city. He remarked that Cork held a particularly unfavourable reputation in this respect. The extended hours imposed a severe burden on shop assistants, and he stressed that the solution lay largely in the hands of trade unionists themselves. The Council agreed that immediate steps should be taken to address this grievance and resolved to take appropriate action. After dealing with some routine business, the meeting was adjourned.[224]

In early September, the issue of merchants, traders, and agents continuing to import manufactured goods at a time when unemployment had reached unprecedented levels was strongly condemned at a meeting of the Cork Trades Council. The Council called on the Government to impose a ban on such practices. It was also decided to seek the support of the Irish Industrial Development Association and the Irish Products League, and to appeal for assistance from three delegates representing the trades most affected by foreign imports, in order to develop a national strategy. The President, Mr. G. Nason, remarked that the scale of unemployment in Cork city and county was appalling. Mr. Weldon noted that goods which had been produced in Cork for over 36 years were now being imported from countries such as Switzerland. Mr. O'Sullivan highlighted that approximately £11 million worth of boots and shoes were being brought into Ireland annually. Instead of having 70 boot manufacturers in operation, there were now only five remaining.[225]

In September 1921, Robert Day (a future Labour TD), a city councillor and the chief commissioner of the harbour dockers' union in Cork city, commanded the red flag to be hoisted above the harbour. As the '*Irish Times*' reflected in 2015, among the more peculiar events during that turbulent

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[224] *Evening Echo 15/7/1921*

[225] *Irish Independent 6/9/1921*

era was also the capture of a mental asylum in County Monaghan, where far-left IRA associate Peadar O'Donnell enlisted the assistance of staff and patients in a brief takeover.[226]

Notably, the 'Cork Soviet' was also reported on in the '*New York Times*.' According to the paper, a tense standoff arose when labourers seized the offices of the Cork Harbour Board after their demand for a minimum wage of 70 shillings per week was refused. The situation escalated until the Labour Ministry of Dáil Éireann intervened to restore calm and reopen negotiations. The Cork city region of the Irish Transport & General Workers' Union (IT&GWU) had resolved that, if their wage demands were not met, they would occupy the Harbour Board's premises, and assume operational control of the port. Acting on this resolution, union members, led by Mr. R. Day, who held positions on both the Harbour Board and Cork Corporation, entered the board's offices. Mr. Day had informed the Secretary, Sir James Long, that he was taking command. Upon Sir James's refusal to co-operate, he and other staff members were summarily dismissed by the occupiers. Following the occupation, the workers raised a red flag above the building as a symbol of workers' control, announcing plans to collect shipping dues directly and redirect these funds to trade union members.

The occupation drew significant attention in Cork, a city primarily aligned with Sinn Féin. Concerns arose not only over the wage dispute, but also regarding its potential to disrupt ongoing national peace efforts. The newspaper believed that some voices had accused the strikers of undermining the national interest, suggesting that the Irish Republican Army (IRA) ought to intervene, expel the occupiers, and restore the board's authority if talks were not resumed. However, this did not occur.

The newspaper also reported that the involvement of the Dáil Éireann's Labour Ministry led to the reopening of negotiations between the Harbour Board and union

[226] *Irish Times 4/5/2015*

representatives. As a result, the labourers agreed to return to work while discussions continued, with hopes that a resolution would be achieved. Port operations remained largely unaffected throughout the dispute.[227]

A special meeting of the Cork Trades and Labour Council was held to work towards settling the dispute. The President, Mr George Nason, took the chair, and there was a large turnout of delegates. In opening the meeting, Mr Nason stated that it had been convened to discuss the ongoing dispute involving the Harbour Board. He addressed recent claims suggesting that trade unionists were opposed to the Government, firmly denying such allegations. He stressed that the unions were not against the Government, and regretted that it had become entangled in every minor dispute. Their real opposition, he claimed, was directed at those who, over the past eight months, had allegedly misled their employees, and were now pretending ignorance of the dispute's origins.

Mr Nason also responded to claims that the trade union movement did not support the IT&GWU. As President of the Council, he asserted that the union had the full moral and financial backing of the trade unionists of Cork. That support, he added, would have been active had a strike occurred. Fortunately, he claimed, a confrontation had been avoided. He remarked that if there had been more members like the Chairman on the Harbour Board, and fewer like Captain Collins, there would have been no need for their union council meeting.

He pointed out that, in his view, the dispute had also revealed deeper issues, such as the poor state of the quay walls and the neglected slob-lands, which reflected badly on the Harbour Board. If workers could live on promises, he said, then perhaps they should approach their employers for a wage reduction—since they were apparently well supplied with promises. Mr Nason had then invited the Secretary, Mr Weldon, to read out the agreement that had been reached, expressing his hope that no speaker would make any remarks

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[227] *'The Cork Harbour Strike of 1921'. Libcom (2013).*

likely to worsen the situation. Mr Weldon read the terms of the agreement.[228]

At another meeting, which took place a few days later, Mr George Nason presided over the Labour Council, which saw a substantial turnout of delegates. A letter was received from the city Corporation requesting that the Council appoint four delegates to a Commission being established to examine the cost of living for workers in Cork. Alderman Kenneally, representing the Transport Workers, raised concerns regarding both the constitution and terms of reference of the proposed Commission. He criticised Clause A, which tasked the Commission with defining a "standard of living" and determining a "suitable" wage for it. In his view, the term "suitable" risked being interpreted similarly to the previous commission's findings, which resulted in a minimum wage recommendation. He proposed replacing "suitable" with "equivalent," to ensure that workers were not short-changed. He also objected to the inclusion of overtime in the terms of reference, arguing that with a 43-hour work week, overtime should not factor into wage calculations. Furthermore, he challenged the composition of the Commission, noting that the Council was allowed only four representatives, while employers also had four. He pointed out that several others named on the Commission were not sympathetic to workers and could effectively side with employers. Kenneally suggested that the Council refrain from appointing any representatives until the terms of reference and structure of the Commission were revised. Otherwise, any resulting report could prejudice the position of workers and undermine their efforts. Mr Collins (Asylum Workers) questioned the outcome of the previous Commission, asking whether it had successfully set a minimum wage and if its findings were implemented by the Corporation. Alderman Kenneally responded that the prior Commission had failed to adhere to its own terms of reference and had deviated from establishing a genuine standard wage. Kenneally also objected to the time set for the Commission's first meeting—3 o'clock that day—stating that, as someone representing 8,000 workers and being a worker himself, he was unable to

[228] *Evening Echo 7/9/1921*

attend at that time. He argued for a more accessible hour. Mr Fitzgerald proposed that the Council not engage with the Commission at all, predicting that their voices would be outvoted and wages reduced as a result. Mr Hickey (National Union of Dockers) seconded the motion, asserting that workers must retain the right to determine their own labour policy. He denounced the Commission as a mechanism to prevent industrial unrest while ignoring the real suffering of the working class caused by immoral control of industry. The true solution, he declared, was to make workers co-owners of production, enabling them to contribute their labour freely and effectively. Alderman Kenneally asked for the reasoning behind Mr Fitzgerald's stance. Fitzgerald replied that he objected to binding himself—or the Council—"hand and foot" to any external body, maintaining that workers were best placed to judge what constituted a living wage.

Mr O'Mahony (Railway Clerks) inquired whether this Commission had any connection with the recent settlement involving the Harbour Board, and whether rejecting the Commission would negatively affect the Transport Workers. It was observed that the Commission would likely proceed with or without endorsement from the Trades Council, but its findings would not necessarily be binding. Mr Keane (Asylum Workers) added that the Council should simply ignore the Commission and allow it to proceed without their participation. Alderman Kenneally criticised the lack of open support among some Cork trade unionists for the Transport Workers' action in taking over the Harbour Board offices. He called for honesty and transparency, stating that trade unionists should take a clear stand and defend their class interests. Mr Crotty (Painters) referred to the findings of the last Commission, noting that the Harbour Board employees had won their strike. Regarding the flying of the Red Flag, he expressed disagreement with that symbolism and made clear he would not support it in future. Alderman Kenneally responded that it was good to know his stance. The Chairman then put the motion—opposing the Council's participation in the Commission—which passed. He stated that he, too, disagreed with the Commission's structure and the terms of reference. Handbooks listing names of Cork-based sellers of household and personal goods made in

Ireland were received from the Cork I.U.A. and distributed among delegates. The Chairman urged all trade unionists to support the Irish Products League. Mr O'Connell (Brewery Workers) asked the Council to adopt a resolution passed by his union, which called on all trade unionists to favour products from local breweries over brands like Guinness and Bass, which were distributed in Cork using non-union labour. A representative from the Transport Workers seconded the motion, expressing support for action on the matter.[229]

As Professor Emmet O'Connor noted in 2019, the final workplace occupations during the economic disruption signified a profound control over Cork Harbour. At the conclusion, the 'Red Flag' anthem was sung, and the red flag they used was dipped three times in salute before being reverently lowered and replaced with the tricolour. The Cork Harbour Soviet was arguably extraneous to the wage issue and driven solely by political motives. It depicted the transformation of the local 'Soviets' from utilitarian to demonstrative. By 1920, organised labour was being compelled into the revolution through collusion between workers and republicans at the grassroots level, exemplified by activities such as the Limerick Soviet. This was especially evident in the 1920 municipal elections, particularly in Cork City, where there was significant collaboration between the IT&GWU and Sinn Féin, running on a joint-ticket.

Prof. O'Connor also reminds us that the intensification of British counter-insurgency in 1920, marked by nearly 4,000 raids in February alone, unavoidably impacted Labour. Over twelve IT&GWU officials were apprehended. The IT&GWU hall in Cork city was incinerated, and Tadhg Barry, an IT&GWU activist, city councillor, and prominent organiser of agricultural labourers, was incarcerated and subsequently executed by the Crown authorities. In 1920, British intelligence initiated a propaganda operation to portray the Irish revolution as Bolshevist, and Sinn Féin as marionettes of the Communist International. In this context, it is

[229] *Evening Echo 16/9/1921*

noteworthy that the IRA did not interfere in workplace unrest.[230]

The importance of trade union organisers in the battle during this era is well shown by the example of Tadhg Barry, In 2011, Trevor Quinn of SIPTU, writing in '*An Phoblacht,*' said that Barry was a dedicated republican, Sinn Féin activist, and trade unionist whose life was dedicated to the pursuit of Irish independence and workers' rights. He served as a founder member and secretary of Sinn Féin in Cork (1906–08), held an officer position in the Irish Volunteers from 1913, and was actively involved in the Cork branch of the IT&GWU, spearheading battles for farm labourers' pay and the 1920 docks strike. Barry has collaborated with James Connolly on two occasions in Cork. He represented Cork in the 1917 Sinn Féin conference at the Mansion House and was elected alderman in the 1920 municipal elections, contributing to the establishment of the first republican-controlled Corporation of Cork, with Lord Mayors Tomás MacCurtain and Terence MacSwiney. As previously mentioned, on November 15, 1921, few weeks before to the Anglo-Irish Treaty, he was fatally shot in the heart by a Crown sentry. His burial garnered extraordinary reverence: more than 30,000 individuals paraded behind his coffin, Cork City was closed in his tribute, and the procession was led by the IRA, accompanied by bishops, MPs, and even Treaty negotiator Michael Collins, who was expected to be in London instead. Tadhg Barry's life and death illustrate his pivotal involvement in Ireland's republican and labour movements.[231]

The renowned Capt. Jack White, a veteran of the Irish Citizen Army and far-left Irish republican, wrote a history of the Cork Soviet, however, it was lost as his papers were disposed of around the time of his death in 1940.[232]

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[230] *Irish Examiner 18/10/2019*

[231] *Trevor Quinn (2011). 'Campaign to Commemorate Cork Trade Union and Republican Activist.' An Phoblacht https://www.anphoblacht.com/contents/1187*

[232] *'Outta Control' - February 1981*

At a meeting of the Cork Trades and Labour Council held in October 1921, with the President, Mr George Nason, in the chair, a letter was received from Mr Thomas Johnson, Secretary of the Irish Labour Party and Trades Union Congress. Mr Johnson referred to a resolution which was expected to be proposed at the next Cork Corporation meeting by Alderman Coughlan. The resolution stated:

> *"That in all future appointments under this Council, preference be given to members of trade associations who have severed their connection with all foreign societies."*

Mr Johnson drew attention to the recent Congress and the accompanying report of the National Executive, which addressed a similar resolution previously passed in Limerick. The view of the Executive, confirmed by Congress as a whole, was clear: the adoption of such a resolution would effectively allow the employer—in this case, the Corporation—to dictate to the worker which recognised trade union they may or may not join. Such an approach was strongly opposed by the Irish trade union movement. The Labour position was that disputes and divisions within trade unions must be resolved internally by trade unionists themselves. It was not the role of any employer, including publicly elected authorities, to act as patrons of one union to the detriment of another. Furthermore, it was inconsistent with the principles of trade unionism for any union member to seek or accept a 'character certificate' from an employer affirming the standing of their union. Mr Johnson expressed hope that, when the matter came before the Corporation, Labour members would act in accordance with the established policy of the Trades Union Congress. It was decided to send copies of Mr Johnson's letter to both the Cork Corporation and the Harbour Board. Additionally, Mr Day, T.C., H.C., would be asked to move that a similar resolution, already recorded in the minutes of the Harbour Board, be rescinded.

A letter was also received from Mr R. W. Sinnott of the City of Cork Steam Packet Company, in response to a recent complaint made by the Council concerning the outsourcing of work from the Port of Cork. Mr Sinnott explained that the

vessel in question, The Classic, was not owned by his company but merely chartered by it, and therefore the company bore no responsibility for its repairs or overhauls. The Chairman noted that this letter served as a reply to correspondence sent by the Council a fortnight ago. However, a more recent letter from the previous week had yet to receive a response, and so the Council remained in the same position as it had the week prior. Mr Allen, T.C., reported that members of his union in the flour milling sector were facing a proposed wage reduction to take effect the following Friday. The men had met the previous Sunday and resolved that, should the reduction be implemented, they would not return to work. He also criticised the continued importation of foreign-milled flour, which was cheaper than locally milled flour, without any reduction in retail prices to benefit the public. Mr Coyle also addressed the issue, supporting Mr Allen's remarks.[233]

In November 1921, at a meeting of the Skibbereen Urban District Council (UDC), presided over by Mr Timothy Sheehy, the following resolution was proposed by Mr Patrick Sheehy, seconded by Mr James Duggan, and unanimously adopted:

> *"That we, the Skibbereen Urban Council, representing the people of Skibbereen, view with the gravest concern the suspension of all traffic on the Cork and Bandon Railway. Such a disruption to the commercial activity of an extensive region constitutes a serious threat to general prosperity. In these times of economic depression, it only serves to intensify the hardships already being endured and which continue to grow daily. Without expressing any opinion on the merits of the dispute between the railway company and its employees, we earnestly appeal to both parties to reconsider the situation. To that end, we respectfully propose that the railway company, representatives of the railway workers involved, and delegates of the Cork Trades Council convene with a view to reaching an agreement that would bring an end to this destructive conflict and permit the resumption of services along the line. Furthermore, we request that Mr Michael Collins and Mr*

[233] *Evening Echo 28/10/1921*

Seán Hales, T.D.s for South and West Cork, kindly use their influence to help bring about a fair and satisfactory resolution."

Later that month, following the untimely death of Republican-IT&GWU Alderman/city councillor Tadgh Barry, a guard of honour featuring the IRA, the Cork Trades Council (featuring Mr. Nason), the Irish Labour Party appeared at his funeral.[234]

By early December 1921, '*The Workers' Republic*' had reported that the employees of the Cork and Macroom and the Cork and Muskerry Railways had been on strike for some time. Repeated efforts to resolve the dispute had failed, and, in the opinion of the article, the workers were clearly determined to secure their "pound of flesh." The phrase here was used critically to suggest an unwavering and perhaps harsh insistence on their demands. All sorts and classes of people, the article noted, had been considerably inconvenienced by the ongoing strike. A collective outcry had arisen, with many raising their voices in protest. The Press, as the article put it, had been at the forefront of this chorus of complaint. According to the article's view, newspapers had offered a wide range of justifications for the intervention of so-called "impartial" and "disinterested" outsiders into the dispute. One such argument repeatedly cited in the press, the article claimed, was economic: "It is full time this strike were ended. The Christmas trade of West Cork will be ruined if the dispute is not settled at once." This line, while presented as a public concern, was portrayed in the article as part of a broader media-driven campaign to pressure the workers into submission.[235]

Also in December 1921, the '*Irish Independent*' reported that opinions of satisfaction had been expressed at a meeting of

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[234] *Irish Independent 21/11/1921*

[235] *The Workers' Republic 10/12/1921*

the Cork Trades Council as to the matter of the Anglo-Irish peace settlement.[236]

In the New Year of 1922, Countess Markievicz remarked in a speech, as reported by the '*Cork Examiner*,' that if Ireland had already been a free Republic, she would have welcomed the King of England on a visit. However, since Ireland was not free, she declared herself a rebel—"an unconverted and unconvertible rebel"—a statement that reportedly drew supportive applause from those present. She noted that Republicans like herself had often been sneered at for their convictions, including by men who had once fought for the Republic themselves. She suggested that these critics had claimed that modern Republicans did not understand what they meant by a Republic. In response, she asserted that she knew exactly what she meant: a Workers' Republic, a Co-operative Commonwealth, the kind of Republic for which the 1916 Easter Rising leader, James Connolly, had given his life. That, she argued, was precisely the vision the Crown would always strive to suppress.

She believed that the Crown would rather offer a Home Rule Bill—backed by "capitalist interests" in both Britain and Ireland—than allow the emergence of a Republic led by and for the working class. In her view, the Treaty had been offered initially because England had found itself in a tight position and needed to redeploy its troops for further imperial campaigns elsewhere. A second reason, she claimed, was that Dáil Éireann had become too democratic, posing a threat to imperial control. She criticised the idea that England was willingly evacuating Ireland, urging her audience to recall how long it had taken Britain to withdraw from Egypt. She questioned what guarantee there was that more than a token withdrawal would occur, suggesting instead that only a partial evacuation might be used to free up troops for other imperial fronts. In sum, her remarks as outlined in the '*Cork Examiner*' made clear that her vision of a Republic extended far beyond constitutional reform or national symbolism—it was about economic justice, popular

[236] *Irish Independent 9/12/1921*

democracy, and a break from both supposed imperial and capitalist domination, regarded as intertwined.[237]

At the January 1922 meeting of the Cork and District Trades and Labour Council, the President, Mr George Nason, referred to the death of His Holiness the Pope. He remarked that, in keeping with the actions of other public bodies, the Council should adjourn as a mark of respect on the occasion of the passing of the Head of the Catholic Church. Mr Nason proposed that the meeting be adjourned and that the Council's Honorary President, the Very Rev. Dr Thomas, be requested to convey to the Most Rev. Dr Cohalan an expression of their sincere sympathy. Mr Forde (Vice-President) seconded the proposal, stating that the late Pontiff was a true and faithful disciple of the great Prince of Peace. His efforts to bring the European war to an early conclusion had clearly demonstrated this. Mr Weldon also supported the motion, which was passed unanimously, with all delegates standing.[238]

At a meeting of Cork Corporation in late January 1922, Robert Day, a Labour city councillor (T.C), on the issue of independence between 'Free State' and the 'Republic,' remarked that:

> *"It would be a Workers' Republic, which would safeguard the rights of the workers as well as those of property owners, and which would ensure that property owners used their property for the benefit of the State and those who had created that property."*[239]

On the same day, the '*Evening Echo*' documented that a labour dispute at the large market town of Mallow, Co. Cork, assumed extraordinary and unusual features in late January 1922. The town experienced a highly unique situation when, on Wednesday evening, the mills' workers and the local

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[237] *Cork Examiner 4/1/1922*

[238] *Cork Examiner 27/1/1922*

[239] *Cork Examiner 31/1/1922*

workers' association—comprising around sixty employees—took control of the mill, establishing their own management and forming a workers' council. This unusual development caused considerable excitement in Mallow and throughout the surrounding area. The controversy intensified with the arrival of fully armed contingents of the Anti-Treaty I.R.A., drawn from various centres in North Cork and under the command of Brigadier Commandant Sean Moylan, T.D. The units were billeted in different houses around the town and conducted public military drills during the day. Several members were posted on guard near the mills at Quartertown. Initially, their presence caused concern among residents, who feared the possibility of conflict. However, this alarm quickly turned to relief when it was learned that the I.R.A.'s role was limited to preserving order and preventing looting or damage. Visits to the mills during this period revealed that operations were proceeding as usual, and a calm and quiet atmosphere prevailed. The dispute's origins were explained to an '*Evening Echo*' representative by Mr. McGrath, one of the workers' leaders and acting branch organiser of the Irish Transport & General Workers' Union in the district. He stated that the trouble began with a proposal from the Flour Milling Association of Ireland to reduce wages by 4s per week in country mills and 6s per week in city mills. A ballot was conducted among the Transport Workers' Union members, but only half of them voted. The proposal was narrowly rejected, with the men from Cork City, Midleton, and Buttevant refusing to accept the new conditions. A national conference was subsequently held in Dublin in December 1921, chaired by the then Minister of Labour, Countess Markievicz. The Transport Workers' Union proposed adjourning the matter until the Minister of Economics could review the intricacies of the milling industry comprehensively. The mill owners agreed to consider the issue within their association, with no reductions to be implemented in the meantime. When the Flour Milling Association later refused the proposal, they suggested arbitration based on the cost of living. The IT&GWU declined this suggestion. In several country mills in the Midland counties, the wage reduction was applied, but no Southern mills enforced it before 1st January 1922. On 3rd January, Messrs. Hallinan notified employees at Clondulane,

Midleton, and Mallow of the intended 4s per week wage reduction. Workers in Midleton and Mallow refused, while Clondulane employees agreed, provided national arbitration on the Belfast basis was held—meaning deductions would be refunded if arbitration ruled against the millers.

The firm issued a week's notice, and the men in Mallow and Midleton, refusing the new conditions, announced a strike for Saturday, 14th January 1922. On Sunday, 15th January, Commandant Sean Moylan (Cork No.2 Brigade - North Cork) requested a conference with both parties in Mallow. The firm refused to reinstate the men unless they accepted the reduced wages but proposed that they return under Belfast arbitration terms. The workers rejected this, citing uncertainty over arbitration and requesting proof of the firm's inability to pay pre-strike wages. The conference ended without resolution. The situation escalated on Wednesday, 18th January, when the workers took possession of the offices and factory, working independently. Clerical staff, who had remained on duty, left once the men assumed control. Mr. McGrath stated that all produce was sold for cash only, with receipts issued by both parties. The firm's books were closed up to midnight on Wednesday, and the workers maintained separate records of all transactions. Commandant Moylan formally notified Mr. McGrath that he would be responsible for preventing looting or damage. At night, Anti-Treaty I.R.A. volunteers, posted as guards, were reinforced by mill workers themselves. Reports indicated that the mills' output averaged about 20 tons per day, and since taking control, the workers had been engaged in conditioning grain and related tasks. Additional points reported were:

- Martial Law had not been proclaimed in Mallow by the I.R.A.
- I.R.A. men were drafted to prevent trouble during the mills' strike.
- The I.R.A. had no legal authority to prevent workers from entering the mills and would not interfere unless damage or looting occurred.

It was confirmed that the I.R.A. had no direct involvement in the alleged kidnapping of Major Hallinan or the removal of

his motor car and other property; the return of these items was under I.R.A. supervision, with a resolution expected within the week. The paper reported that the local Commandant awaited instructions regarding future action.[240]

The '*Irish Independent*' reported that, in February 1922, at a Special Congress of the Irish Labour Party & Trades Union Congress held in Dublin city, it was resolved that, while recognising that there may be division amongst the delegates on their views towards the 'Treaty' and its implications on Irish society, that:

> *"In short, the object of the Irish Labour Party is, and must be to establish in Ireland a Co-operative Workers' Republic."*

This was proposed by Mr. Tom Johnson, leader of the organisation, and seconded by Mr. George Nason, president of the Cork Trades and Labour Council.[241]

The '*Cork Examiner*' reported on 9 February 1922 that, during the previous morning, a party of the Army entered the Quartertown Mills, Mallow. Those employees who had been in possession left immediately. Representatives of the owners then took over the mill. The mills were subsequently guarded by the Army under the orders of the local Chamber of Commerce and Shipping, which stated that the Provisional Government of the Irish Free State had arranged to end the unauthorised action of certain persons in taking over the mills.[242] On 27 February 1922, the '*Cork Examiner*' documented that a settlement had been reached at the flour mills in Mallow, and all the men had returned to work.[243]

At a March 1922 meeting of the Cork and District Trades and Labour Council, grave concern was expressed over the

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[240] *Evening Echo 27/1/1922*

[241] *Irish Independent 22/2/1922*

[242] *Cork Examiner 9/2/1922*

[243] *Cork Examiner 27/2/1922*

ongoing dispute between postal workers and the Postmaster-General. The issue arose from what was described as an unjustifiable reduction in wages, which the postal servants firmly opposed. They emphasised that their stance was based solely on economic grounds, and rejected any accusations of political disloyalty. The workers indicated that they were prepared to have the matter submitted to arbitration before any reduction was implemented, but the response received insisted that the wage cut be enacted first, with inquiry possibly following at a later date. The postal employees stated that they had been misled before by such assurances and could no longer accept cuts without prior review. They regretted the inconvenience that a strike might cause but insisted that responsibility lay with those refusing arbitration. Offers to resolve the matter through Dáil arbitration had been rebuffed, and as the wage cut was due to take effect over the weekend, the workers felt they had no alternative but to withdraw their labour. The Chairman of the Council described the situation as serious, and proposed that a representation be made to the Postmaster-General requesting a suspension of the wage cut and the facilitation of an impartial inquiry. Mr Navin criticised the financial claims made by the Irish Postmaster-General as misleading, and reiterated that the workers' only concern was a fair wage in line with the cost of living. Mr Matson proposed, and Mr O'Connell seconded, that the Chairman's suggestion be adopted, and that the Council Secretary immediately telegraph the Postmaster-General urging a stay of the wage reduction until arbitration could be held.

Mr Jerry Kelleher (Tailors' Union) stressed that the rising cost of living made the proposed wage cut unacceptable, and that the postal workers' willingness to submit to arbitration demonstrated good faith. He urged the Council to press the Provisional Government to delay the cuts to avoid widespread disruption in southern Ireland. Mr Hickey suggested that the Secretary of the Labour Party and the Trade Union Executive be asked to intervene and attempt to postpone the strike. The Chairman responded that the Executive would need to convene before this could occur, but supported the resolution to immediately contact the Postmaster-General. Mr Fitzgibbon suggested that the matter

be discussed without the press present, but this was opposed by Mr O'Donovan (Postal Workers), who welcomed media transparency, stating that the press tended to side with authority. He clarified that the official notice regarding wage reductions in England had initially excluded "Southern Ireland." However, within three days of communications between Dublin and London, "Southern Ireland" was also included, despite Mr J.J. Walsh, the Postmaster-General, claiming he was not responsible for the decision.

Mr O'Donovan argued that if the Provisional Government was truly responsible for public services, then it must also control their financial administration. He accused officials of deferring action with vague reassurances, while expecting workers to accept cuts without consultation. The Council unanimously adopted the resolution to telegraph Mr J.J. Walsh, Postmaster-General, urging him to delay the wage reduction pending arbitration. An addendum was also agreed to contact the Secretary of the Labour Party requesting immediate intervention.[244]

In April 1922, A meeting of trade unionists in Cork was held on Monday under the chairmanship of Mr G. Nason, President of the Cork Trades Council. The gathering strongly and enthusiastically endorsed the recent resolution passed by the Labour Party. Varying views were expressed. For example, Mr R. Anthony praised the Labour Party for having the moral courage to declare that they had had enough of the gunmen, signalling a firm rejection of militarism. Mr R. Day, T.C., stated that the aim of Irish Labour was to bring an end to both militarism and blackguardism. He criticised the "militarists," remarking that they had no understanding of what it meant to go without a proper meal. However, in contrast, Mr J. Good, T.C., noted that there could be no real safety for Irish men or women while England still retained any power or influence over the country's destiny. He also identified capitalism as the root cause underlying the ongoing unrest. Mr J. Kelleher, T.C., highlighted the scale of unemployment, pointing out that 7,000 people were idle in Cork. Mr P. Murphy emphasised

[244] *Evening Echo 3/3/1922*

the precarious nature of employment in the city, warning that the small number of those still working did not even have a 24-hour guarantee of continued employment if current conditions persisted.[245]

In May 1922, the Cork District Trades and Labour Council was represented on the Cork Reconstruction Finance Committee by Mr. James Barry.[246]

In June 1922, regarding a deputation to meet with the Cork Harbour Board regarding working terms and conditions, the Cork Trades Council selected Messrs. G. Nason, T. Walsk, J.P. Weldon, and George Durcan. Mr. T. Foran was also selected on behalf of the IT&GWU.[247]

Following the June 1922 general election for the Irish Free State Dáil, at a meeting of the Cork Trades Council, its President, Mr. George Nason addressed the members, highlighting the recent electoral success of Labour in Cork. He stated that, for the first time in its history, Labour had succeeded in electing the senior member for the city — a notable and significant victory. However, he cautioned against complacency or arrogance, urging that they not become "swelled-headed." Mr Nason reassured those present that, upon gaining control of public boards, Labour did not intend to act in a despotic manner toward the merchants or commercial classes of the city. He acknowledged that Labour could not afford to do without them. Rather, he said, the expectation would be mutual cooperation — if the commercial classes "toed the line," Labour would respond in kind, with fairness and integrity. He added that he would not be surprised if Labour secured five or six seats in the Cabinet, expressing confidence that Labour representatives

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[245] *Irish Independent 26/4/1922*

[246] *McCarthy, T (2010). Rising from the Ashes: The Burning of Cork's Carnegie Library and the Rebuilding of its Collections. Cork City Libraries*

[247] *Evening Echo 8/6/1922*

would serve the country more effectively than some of their predecessors in those positions.[248]

In July 1922, the '*Voice of Labour*' publication reported that "in spite of civil wars and rumours of civil wars," the Dunmanway, County Cork branch of the IT&GWU had "made no concessions on its Class War programme." Atkins & Co. had reportedly closed their mills, due to a dispute between a workman and a foreman, and "the Branch seized the opportunity by refusing to permit a reopening until a five-day working week had been granted to the men on short hours." The demand was allegedly conceded under the threat that the alternative would have been Workers' Control.[249]

In August 1922, a deputation from the Cork Unemployment Central Committee attended a meeting of the Cork Trades Council to highlight the dire condition of the unemployed in the city, and to seek the Council's support in organising a demonstration to draw public attention to their plight.

The speaker who introduced the deputation stated that the unemployed demanded work, if any could be found; and if not, then food should be provided to prevent starvation. When the speaker remarked that "the situation in the country at present was of no good to anyone," he expressed a sentiment that was widely echoed. It was, as the phrase went, "not, nor could it come to good." That observation appeared beyond dispute; even the least informed could not fail to see its truth. The helplessness of those most affected only made the situation all the more lamentable. The speaker also asserted that "there was plenty of work in Cork—if it were opened up." The Council had already expressed its deep sympathy with the unemployed, and its willingness to support any legitimate effort to improve their condition. However, it had also pointed out what should have been clear to all: that no real improvement in the labour market could be expected

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[248] *Irish Independent 24/6/1922*

[249] *The Voice of Labour 29/7/1922*

until the political turmoil then prevailing had been brought to a final and decisive end.

Indeed, it was suggested that there would have been ample work in Cork if conditions had allowed. But who, in such circumstances, it was asked, would risk launching new commercial ventures or investing capital when each day threatened new instability and potential ruin? It was not reasonable in the speaker's view to expect investment under such insecure conditions. This was seemingly a problem that the Council could not solve, nor did it see how others could do so while the existing conditions persisted. No rational businessperson, it was claimed, would invest in ventures that might be undone overnight. A Council delegate reiterated its firm belief that the only path to employment lay through the restoration of peace and public security. No reasonable person, it was argued, could dispute the truth of this position. One speaker at the meeting had rightly pointed out that the present circumstances discouraged enterprise of any kind. The Council sincerely hoped that a solution to the current deadlock might be found, and that effective measures could be taken to relieve the widespread and acute distress then being experienced across the city. It was, they believed, intolerable that able-bodied men—eager and prepared to work—should be forced into idleness, unable to provide for those dependent on them. Few situations could be more wretched.

This was regarded as all the more tragic given that, had it not been for the political unrest, Cork's working people might have enjoyed a level of prosperity previously unknown. The Council expressed its hope that whatever course of action the unemployed ultimately chose to take, their decisions would be guided by prudence, restraint, and common sense. Only through such virtues, it believed, could their cause gain the strength, dignity, and public support it rightly deserved. The Council also noted that the unemployed had the fullest sympathy of the public in their distress.[250]

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[250] *Evening Echo 4/8/1922*

In November 1922, the decision by the Government's military authorities to make attestation a prerequisite for employment in barracks for mechanics and workers was the subject of a conference of trade union representatives held at the Mansion House, Dublin. Mr. L. J. O'Duffy, Vice-Chairman of the Labour Party Executive, presided over the meeting, which was attended by delegates from the Dublin, Limerick, Belfast, and Cork Trades Councils. After several hours of discussion, a committee was appointed to consult with the Labour Party Executive with a view to making representations on the matter to the Government.[251]

An article titled "New Plan Outlined by Anti-Treaty Leaders," published in the '*Southern Star*' on Saturday, 30 September 1922, presented what it described as the new political and social programme of the Republican, or anti-Treaty, faction during the Irish Civil War. The piece began by noting that the Government's Publicity Department had released a statement summarising this "programme," said to have been drawn up by leading anti-Treaty figures including Liam Mellows and Piaras Béaslaí. The '*Southern Star*'—a staunchly pro-Free State paper based in Co. Cork—had approached this particular document with a marked scepticism, suggesting it represented an attempt by Republican leaders to reframe their rebellion as a political movement and to mask it in the rhetoric of social reform. The newspaper portrayed the initiative as a propaganda strategy aimed at gaining the support of Irish labourers and small farmers, whom it claimed had thus far remained largely indifferent or hostile to the anti-Treaty cause. According to the article, the anti-Treaty programme, issued in late August 1922, laid out a "Republican Policy and Plan of Campaign" that sought to combine social, economic, and political reform with the ongoing military struggle to restore the Irish Republic. It based its legitimacy on the 1919 "Declaration of Independence," asserting that this remained the only true foundation of Irish sovereignty. The signatories rejected the authority of the Dáil and Government established under the Anglo-Irish Treaty, describing them as "British creations," and insisted that the Republic proclaimed in 1916 and

[251] *Irish Independent 6/11/1922*

reaffirmed in 1919 was the sole lawful government of Ireland. Consequently, the new plan demanded non-recognition of the Free State's laws, taxes, and institutions.

The '*Southern Star*' provided a detailed summary of the document, focusing on its social and economic proposals. The anti-Treaty leaders maintained that independence could not be sustained without economic justice, and that the Republic must rest on the support of workers and small farmers. They envisioned a co-operative Ireland, both industrially and agriculturally, where national wealth served the common good rather than private profit. The programme advocated nationalisation of banks, transport, and key industries, along with sweeping land reform, redistribution of large estates, and a tax on wealth to fund social improvements. The newspaper highlighted the use of phrases such as "abolition of exploitation" and "control of the means of production," claiming this language was "borrowed from the vocabulary of Bolshevism." It dismissed the plan as a cynical attempt to "capture Irish labour" by adopting socialist rhetoric, suggesting it was an effort to give ideological cover to what it viewed as an armed revolt. The programme also characterised the Irish Free State as a continuation of British rule under another guise, arguing that the Treaty had bound Ireland to the Empire through the oath of allegiance, the Governor-General, and other symbols of subordination. It accused the Free State of deceiving the Irish people into serving British Imperial interests. In contrast, the Republicans claimed their policy would abolish the Treaty settlement and establish a just social order based on Irish control of Ireland's resources. The '*Southern Star*' mocked this as an attempt to "turn defeat into doctrine," asserting that the anti-Treaty side, unable to win militarily, was trying to justify its actions through populist appeals to the disaffected.

Sections of the Anti-Treaty IRA programme concerning labour promised full rights of organisation, higher wages, and secure employment for workers, as well as the creation of workers' and farmers' councils to manage local industries and agriculture. The paper argued that these ideas, tailored to attract trade union and Labour Party sympathies, were

unrealistic and economically ruinous. It accused the Republicans of hypocrisy, noting that their campaign was destroying railways and factories while claiming to defend Irish labour. The programme also framed the Irish struggle as part of a global anti-imperialist movement, aligning Ireland with nations such as India, Egypt, and South Africa. The '*Southern Star*' dismissed this as an empty gesture, contending that the anti-Treaty movement's actions undermined Ireland while pretending to fight for oppressed peoples worldwide.

To counter fears of Soviet-led communist influence, the Republican leaders stressed that their movement was not anti-religious, denying any link with "atheistic communism" and asserting that their reforms were consistent with Christian social principles. The '*Southern Star*' treated this as opportunistic, claiming the plan still bore "the mark of Moscow" through its class-based economic theories. The article further criticised the section on governance, in which the anti-Treaty side proposed reviving the 1919 Dáil as the legitimate parliament of Ireland, with the Republican Army serving as its executive. This provisional government would remain until elections could be held under the "true Republic." The newspaper ridiculed the proposal as delusional, arguing that the Republicans were attempting to rule a nation they were simultaneously destroying. It accused them of seeking to perpetuate revolution to maintain their authority. The proposed "Republican Constitution," promising adult suffrage and worker participation in administration, was condemned as a recipe for "confiscation of property and the destruction of order." The paper noted that its emphasis on workers' rights and civic duty echoed contemporary Communist and syndicalist ideas.

In conclusion, the '*Southern Star*' insisted to its readers in County Cork that the "new plan" was not a credible political blueprint but a desperate effort to disguise defeat. It portrayed the anti-Treaty movement as rebranding itself as a social revolution after failing as a national one, exploiting economic hardship and popular discontent under the guise of justice and equality. The paper warned that its implementation would bring "anarchy and ruin," not

independence. Ultimately, it depicted the plan as a blend of idealism, opportunism, and subversion—an appeal to disillusioned workers and farmers that, in the '*Southern Star's*' view, masked an attempt to impose foreign revolutionary doctrines on Ireland, while the Free State alone stood for stability, property, and civilisation.[252]

In late November 1922, it was reported in the radical '*The Workers' Republic*' publication that the Cork city branch of the Irish Transport & General Workers' Union (IT&GWU), of which Mr. Robert Day, TD, was Hon. Secretary, had passed a resolution protesting against the continued imprisonment of Miss Mary MacSwiney in Mountjoy Jail by the Provisional Government of the Irish Free State. In the resolution, the Union strongly condemned the Government's actions, describing them as undemocratic, tyrannical, and a violation of every citizen's right to hold and express political views. The statement asserted that remaining silence in the face of such injustice would be equivalent to condoning it. Accordingly, the Union called upon the Irish Labour Party, which they held partly responsible for the situation, to immediately demand and ensure Miss MacSwiney's release. The resolution insisted that prompt action was necessary. Copies of the resolution were to be sent to both the Irish Labour Party and the Cork Workers' Council. These organisations were urged to take immediate steps to secure Miss MacSwiney's release should the Government have failed to act.[253]

In January 1923, Mr. G. Nason, presiding at a meeting of the Cork Trades/Workers' Council, paid a warm tribute to their Honorary President, the Rev. Dr. Thomas, O.S.F.O., whose departure they were soon to face. He particularly praised Father Thomas's efforts in promoting conciliation in labour disputes. In his response, Father Thomas stated that the best interests of society were served, the highest level of social progress achieved, and trade and commerce most effectively developed in communities where a strong trade union

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[252] *Southern Star 30/9/1922*

[253] *The Workers' Republic 25/11/1922*

movement existed—provided it was well-directed and grounded in Christian principles.

Mr. P. Murphy, T.C., in proposing a vote of thanks, remarked that every worker in Cork recognised Father Thomas's value, and expressed the collective hope that his forthcoming mission to America would be a successful one. The Chairman then presented Father Thomas with a beautifully crafted, and also artistically mounted, coloured portrait enlargement. Father Thomas expressed his heartfelt gratitude in a touching reply. Separately, at the Priory on Charlotte Quay, Father Thomas was also presented with a suitably engraved wrist-watch by the Cork Part-Time Teachers' Association.[254]

At a meeting of the Macroom District Committee held on 21 January 1923, delegates from the parish branches of Aghinagh, Aughabulloge, Ballyvourney, Clondrohid, South Kilmurry, and Macroom town attended. The annual election of officers resulted in the unanimous re-election of T. D. Keating (Kilmurry) as chairman, while Tadgh Ua Cuill/Quill (Clondrohid) was elected secretary following the resignation of T. Connell. The committee discussed unemployment in the district and resolved to press both the District Council and County Council to have all road works carried out by direct labour instead of by contract, arguing that the £2,000–£3,000 allocated for roads would provide valuable employment at a time of severe unemployment. Considerable discussion also took place regarding cottages in the district, as an earlier agreement between the I.T.&G.W.U. and the District Council had not been sanctioned by the Dáil, while rents were now being demanded despite the generally poor condition of the cottages. It was decided to notify Tom Johnson T.D. and Tom Nagle T.D. and request that they make enquiries with the Minister for Local Government. The meeting concluded with a motion proposed by Tadgh Ua Cuill calling for greater organisation within the district through the formation of "One Big Branch." The resolution argued that workers had been hindered by parish divisions and that closer political and

[254] *Irish Independent 20/1/1923*

industrial unity between workers and districts was necessary if labour interests were to advance and keep pace with "capitalist movements of the day."

Additionally, at the Annual General Meeting of the Blarney branch of the IT&GWU, held in the Village Hall on 21 January, the Auditor's Report was considered satisfactory despite the difficult conditions experienced during the previous year, when the Woollen Mills had been closed for much of the time. It was noted that the amount sent to Head Office had greatly increased since the previous annual meeting, which members claimed showed the Branch remained largely free from "scabitis." Officers for the coming year were then unanimously elected, with J. Bradley chosen as chairman and T. Ingerton as secretary, alongside a committee and officers drawn from the membership. The Branch also decided that each department in the Woollen Mills should have representation, and the secretary was instructed to organise sectional meetings for that purpose. Discussion then turned to the organisation and activity of the Branch, with members warning that any remaining "slackers" would receive attention from the committee. The Advisory Committee was congratulated for securing a living wage and effectively handling disputes and wage demands within the factory. The report criticised non-union employers who objected to committee men intervening in disputes and enforcing union principles in the mills, while also urging workers to join the union. The article further noted that road-workers in the district were well organised and seeking increased employment through additional road and bridge works. Finally, criticism was directed at the employers' new payment system in the Woollen Mills, with members arguing that employers had rejected union proposals for payment based on production during the war years, but were now introducing such a system when the manufacture of tweeds and yarns required more time and care.[255]

In February 1923, '*The Workers' Republic*' reported that The Rev. Dr. Thomas, President of the Cork Workers' Council, expressed to a representative of the Cork Examiner his hope

[255] *The Voice of Labour 3/2/1923*

and conviction that he had successfully settled the dispute involving Cork Dockers before his departure for America. That same day, a conference had taken place between the workers involved and the shipping employers, with the Very Rev. Dr. Thomas and George Nason, Secretary of the Workers' Council, acting as mediators. However, the talks proved abortive. The conference resumed later without the presence of the mediators, whose proposals were then under discussion. In the evening, the shipping employers issued a manifesto stating that the workers could resume work under the previous terms—on the condition that the Ministry of Industry and Commerce and Thomas Foran acknowledged the agreement as a national one. They also insisted that, should the one-shilling-per-day pay cut remain in force, any resulting overpayments would need to be refunded. At the same time in Dublin, the leadership of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union met in council. The employer-aligned press soon reported the imminent arrival of a prominent trade union official in Cork.

Indeed, Alderman William O'Brien, T.D., had arrived, accompanied by Hill, the former N.E.C. member. Despite the anticipation surrounding his visit, it appeared to have little impact. No further conference took place during the following days, and a resolution to the dispute remained elusive. The Cork Workers' Council subsequently met and resolved to offer full support to the strikers. The Distributive Workers' Union followed suit. This show of solidarity was unsurprising, as it was difficult to imagine any reasonable worker not recognising the justness of the Cork men's case.[256]

In March 1923, Mr. G. Nason (President) occupied the Chair of the Cork Workers' Council, with delegates from the affiliated organisations in attendance. A communication was received from the Irish Labour Party and Trades Union Congress, indicating that—provided sufficient support was forthcoming—the National Executive intended to establish an Approved Society under the Insurance Acts. This initiative aimed to accommodate Irish trade unionists who had previously been insured through societies headquartered

[256] *The Workers' Republic 3/2/1923*

outside the Irish Free State, but who were required to transfer to an Approved Society within the Free State by the upcoming July. The National Executive expressed interest in receiving, as soon as possible, definitive information on whether these members supported the proposed new society and to what extent they would be prepared to join. The Council had decided to defer consideration of the communication for the time being. Mr. Gordon Campbell, of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, wrote on behalf of the Minister, in response to a letter dated 26 February. The Council had expressed concern that English, Scottish, and Continental firms were being invited to tender for the repair of destroyed railway bridges. Mr. Campbell clarified that the contracts in question involved three bridges in the city and county region: Mallow, Chetwynd Viaduct, and Douglas Viaduct. To illustrate the difficulty of limiting such contracts to Irish firms, he cited the case of the Douglas Viaduct. At the Ministry's request, the railway company had advertised the project for open tender. While three firms from the Co. Cork district expressed interest and received plans and specifications, none submitted a tender. It was reasonably inferred that the firms did not consider themselves capable of undertaking the work, despite it being less complex than that required for the other two bridges.

Mr. Campbell further noted that some time earlier, a Cork firm had submitted an estimate for the required steelwork at the request of the railway company. However, their quote was more than three times the highest tender subsequently received. He emphasised that the Minister could not approve the expenditure of public funds—raised from Irish taxpayers—on any basis that was not economically justified. Since the letter had been written, one of the three local firms had expressed interest in tendering, and a request had been issued to the railway company to consider any new tenders submitted promptly. No action was taken by the Trades Council at that time.

Mr. R. Fleming, Town Clerk of Passage Urban Council, also wrote to the Council. He reported that during a recent meeting, Mr. W. J. Mostyn had drawn attention to the Cork Steam Packet Company's practice of sending its ships to

docks outside the Port of Cork for repairs. Mr. Mostyn claimed to possess documentary evidence showing that some of these ships, which served the South of Ireland trade, had never entered a Cork dock. He made a detailed statement on the considerable revenue these ships earned from exporting cattle and farm produce and importing raw materials, artificial fertilisers, machinery, and more. Mr. Mostyn stated he would temper his criticism but argued that the Cork Steam Packet Company treated the workers of Cork Harbour unfairly by denying employment to those whose labour supported the company's profitable trade. He offered to collaborate with the Farmers' Union, the Cork Trades Council, or any relevant public body to make formal representations to the Steam Packet Company or appropriate government departments. His goal was to ensure future repair work was carried out locally by Cork Harbour workers, who were the most deserving of such employment. The Chairman agreed with Mr. Mostyn's observations but believed the matter would be better addressed by the Executive Committee, given the technical aspects involved. He proposed inviting Mr. Mostyn to the Executive's next meeting, where he could present the detailed information he had gathered. The Council agreed and referred the letter to the Executive.

A reference made by Mr. R. S. Anthony regarding the potential re-enforcement of the Summer Time Act was also referred to the affiliated societies. They were asked to consider the issue and submit their opinions for discussion at a future Council meeting.[257]

In April 1923, '*The Workers' Republic*' launched a scathing attack on Labour's William O'Brien and Tom Johnson. The paper claimed that Alderman William O'Brien, T.D., and his associate, Thomas Johnson, T.D., had allegedly spoken out against the idea of Workers' Control of Industry. It had not been long, the paper claimed, since both were vocal supporters of the concept, publicly aligning themselves with the miners of Arigna and the creamery workers of Cork and Limerick. At that time, the article claimed that they appeared

[257] *Cork Examiner 17/3/1923*

eager to champion workers' causes. However, having since, allegedly, aligned themselves with more supposedly conservative political interests, they had begun to, in the paper's view, criticise the very principles they once promoted —principles that had played a significant role, the publication believed, in advancing their political careers.[258]

In June 1923, the Cork Trades/Workers' Council endorsed a resolution protesting the Government's decision to send the *SS Helga* to the city of Belfast for repairs. The Council decided to request that the Government publish the tenders which had been submitted by Haulbowline and Passage Docks, as well as by Belfast, and to include a comparison of the rates and wages in the respective dockyards.[259]

At the turn of August 1923, an article in '*The Workers' Republic*,' speaking on the terms of an unsuccessful attempt at making a peace deal in Co. Cork, asserted that once the Free State was established, it would inevitably serve the interests of the wealthy classes behind it: large farmers, landlords, and industrial owners. It insisted that the Republicans still had an opportunity to reveal this truth to the masses. The article argued that sentiment alone would not satisfy the workers' material needs, stressing that "sentiment on an empty stomach" was actually no substitute for basic necessities. Consequently, it urged the Republicans to focus their policy on addressing the practical concerns of workers, peasants, small farmers, and even the unemployed who had joined the Free State Army, particularly by showing how their livelihoods could be secured. Reiterating a previous argument, the article claimed the Republic should mean control over land and industry for the benefit of the working class, peasants, and small farmers. It called for the seizure and redistribution of large estates to satisfy the needs of landless and small farmers. The article concluded with a clear call to Republicans, urging them to promote policies aimed at securing life's necessities for these groups, declaring that only then would the Republic be truly won. It radically

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[258] *The Workers' Republic 28/4/1923*

[259] *Irish Independent 16/6/1923*

warned that any attempts to seek peace before these goals were met must be opposed.[260]

A meeting of the members of the Co. Cork branches of the Post Office Workers' Union was held in Father Mathew Hall, Cork, in August 1923. Mr. Navin, Chairman of the Outdoor Branch, presided. He stated that this was one of many meetings being held with the aim of enrolling all eligible postal workers into the Amalgamated Union. Locally, he said, members were fully aware of the need for organisation and the benefits it brought. Only through organising, he asserted, could they succeed. He hoped that following the meeting, all members of the Amalgamated Union in Cork would become active organisers and recruit others into the fold.

Mr. R. Anthony, from the Cork Workers' Council, said he was pleased to attend the meeting. He believed that preaching unity to such an intelligent body of workers was unnecessary. They should all realise that in these times, organisation was essential—something employers understood well, hence their own strong organisation which enabled attacks on the working class. The Post Office, he said, was an institution where unity was both necessary and effective. Unity would yield gains for postal workers, while division only weakened them. He reminded attendees of the Department's past strategy of encouraging sectionalism to divide and conquer. He urged workers to leave the past behind and build a strong, united organisation.

Mr. W. Norton, Organising Secretary of the Post Office Workers' Union, praised the outdoor branches in County Cork for their unity and comradeship. For over a year, trade unionism in the Post Office had been under attack, but those efforts had failed. Thanks to the resilience of dedicated branches, the union had emerged stronger. Despite hostility and misrepresentation, membership was growing steadily, with ten new branches established in the past month and many new members joining existing branches. This growth demonstrated that postal workers were awakening to the importance of organisation and recognised the Amalgamated

[260] *The Workers' Republic 5/8/1922*

Union as the most effective vehicle for advancing their interests. Mr. Norton rejected sectionalism, describing it as a legacy of division that had hindered the workers' progress. Amalgamation, he argued, was essential. He challenged critics to prove how amalgamation harmed their interests and reiterated that unity was the foundation of effective action. If recruitment was pursued seriously and immediately, the union would become strong both in numbers and morale, positioning itself to play a major role in improving conditions for postal workers and contributing to the broader Labour movement.

Mr. Robert Day, T.D and city councillor (T.C.)., Cork City, remarked that the events of the past year demonstrated the need for unity and organisation. The standard of living was under attack across the board, and only by uniting could workers resist. He likened sectional unions to a single stick—easily broken—while unity was like a bundle, much harder to snap. The message was clear: combine to grow stronger.

Mr. McGowan, Chairman of the National Executive, noted that he had followed from afar the attacks on workers by capitalist interests in Cork. The lesson, he said, was that only united workers could hope to prevail. Wage reductions were being pushed across the country, and while workers debated amalgamation, employers had already embraced it for their own ends. He also criticised those who still opposed amalgamation, suggesting their objections stemmed from class snobbery. Everyone, regardless of background, would have a voice in the union. He called on Cork postal workers to abandon sectionalism, and join with the rest of Ireland in forging a united, democratic organisation.

Alderman Kenneally (T.C.), of the Cork Workers' Council, welcomed the amalgamation, saying he had long hoped for it. Opposition to amalgamation stemmed from the same elitist mindset that had maintained sectional divisions in the past. He condemned that attitude as outdated and unproductive. Referring to the September strike, he described it as a bold and inspiring action—comparable to the 1913 Dublin strike, which, though a defeat, had led to the rise of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. Unity and

amalgamation had built the strength of that union, and postal workers could achieve the same. Mr. M. Kirwan proposed the following resolution:

> *"That this meeting of Cork Postal Workers strongly protests against the Government's action in withholding Part 1 of the Douglas Commission's Report. We call upon the National Executive to take immediate action to have the report implemented, and we pledge our wholehearted support."*

Mr. Wade seconded the motion, criticising the Government for its failure to publish or respond to the Commission's report, which had been submitted on 14th December last. He described the Government's inaction as scandalous and called for determined action. The resolution was passed unanimously. Mr. Forde then proposed a vote of thanks to Messrs. Anthony, Day, Kenneally, McGowan, and Norton for their informative addresses. He expressed confidence that the meeting would provide a strong impetus for amalgamation efforts in Cork. Mr. Wade seconded. Mr. Navin concluded by saying that the enthusiasm shown at the meeting was a hopeful sign for the Amalgamated Union's future in Cork. With the cooperation of its members, he claimed that a strong workers' union would be built. He assured the Executive that Cork members would do all they could to recruit every eligible postal worker into the organisation.[261]

At a tense and emotional meeting of the Cork Workers' Council following the General Election of 1923, Mr. G. Nason, President, in the chair, references were made to the city election results.

The President said they all regretted the position in which they found the Labour movement in Cork. Those who had been interested all along could account for what had been going on. The people had been led away by false promises plastered on the dead walls of the city. The Progressive Association promised their supporters any number of things, and time would tell if they carried out their programme for better housing, etc. It was up to the workers to watch the

[261] *Cork Examiner 30/8/1923*

actions of the successful candidates of that Association—the people of their choice—and see that these promises were fulfilled. If such proved to be the case, then there was no necessity for Labour to be represented in the Dáil. If they carried out their promises, he claimed, Labour was content to stand aside.

Labour, he claimed, had put up men who had always been reliable, and who had not let the workers down. Yet, the workers of Cork had turned their backs on them in favour of men working against their interests. If the successful candidates failed to carry out their programme, it was up to the workers to deal with them even more severely than the men who had already proved loyal to Labour.

Mr. Fitzgerald, Vice-President, stated that in view of the fact they no longer represented 30,000 workers, but only about 6,000, and in light of what he termed a base betrayal now evident, he believed their so-called Workers' Council was a farce. The workers had put into power people who were trying to starve them, crush them, and cut their wages. They showed base ingratitude by forgetting what Mr. Day had done for them. “In view of this action,” Mr. Fitzgerald continued, “I move the permanent adjournment of this Council.”

Mr. Kelleher responded that they did not have the authority to do so. He said he understood Mr. Fitzgerald's feelings but urged him not to be carried away by emotion. The leaders of the movement believed Labour was the best party to represent the working classes, but the workers thought otherwise. Labour must not criticise other parties simply because they had gained the workers’ confidence. All that remained was to hope the workers had chosen better men than Day, Anthony, and Kenneally—though he personally doubted it.

He pointed out the inconsistency of workers who praised their unions when they got a 5s. raise, but were quick to turn against them when they lost 1s. They marched through the streets chanting “Down with bosses,” but voted “Up with the bosses.” If they suffered for it, they had brought it on

themselves. It was now the duty of the Council and Labour Party members to maintain the unions. Politically, they no longer had the confidence of the workers, and they must accept that verdict (hear, hear).

Mr. Matheson (Grocers') seconded Mr. Fitzgerald's motion for dissolution of the Council. The President, however, stated the motion was not in order as it contravened the rules. Mr. Kelleher affirmed that two men could not dissolve the Council. Mr. Matheson replied that they were merely putting the motion forward. The President reiterated that the motion could not be accepted.

Mr. Fitzgerald said he once took pride in attending their meetings, believing he represented the workers of Cork. But now, he would ask that his name be withdrawn as the Council had become a farce.

Mr. Harty (Tailors) responded that every movement was subject to reversals. Just because they had suffered a setback did not mean they should panic. He noted the English Labour movement had also suffered losses in the past but had regrouped and emerged stronger. The Labour movement in Cork must do the same. It existed to represent the working classes and was thus a permanent necessity. The Progressive Association and other parties had captured the support of the workers for now, but those same workers would soon realise their mistake.

He expressed respect for one elected man—Professor O'Rahilly—and imagined that even O'Rahilly must now think that the working classes had acted foolishly. However, this was not to suggest the professor was anti-worker. Harty said it was strange that the workers could not elect any of their own candidates, but instead had elected two employers. Still, he urged the Council not to be disheartened. There were still good men in the movement. “Up Labour,” he cried —not in the usual slogan sense, but in the sense of rising from their knees and returning to the fight.

Mr. R. Day, T.C., received with applause, thanked the workers who had stood by him over the past weeks—those

who had done the organising and hard work during the election. With such men behind them, he said, the Labour movement was safe, regardless of some voting patterns. Whether he topped the poll or finished last did not matter to him personally. Although he had lost his seat, he quipped that he was ready to go back to working from a one-horse van, and if asked, he would do the dirty work for the Cork workers again. No worker could say he had let them down—he had always done his best for them.

Now that the election was over and the workers had shown they did not want men of their own class, it was up to them to see that those they had elected kept their promises. "We have got a knock-out blow," he admitted, "but we must get ready for the next fight—the municipal elections." By then, the workers might be sadder and wiser. He bore no ill will to those who voted against him. The people of Cork had once placed him at the top of the poll and made him the first Labour representative in the Irish Parliament—a distinction he remained proud of. He especially thanked the people of Blarney and Mr. T. Ingerton, U.D.C., for their solid support. He was also deeply grateful to Mr. Patrick Buckley, M.C.C. Though he was laying down a burden he had not taken up willingly, he did so with a light heart, knowing he had done his duty.

Mr. Anthony said they had all endured a strenuous week, and although the results were unsatisfactory, they accepted the verdict. He sincerely thanked those who had remained loyal to Labour. He mentioned that many things in the city had worked against them—some of which he asserted, he would only discuss in the absence of the Press. He particularly thanked Messrs. J. Kelleher, T.C., Thomas Walsh, M. Egan, G. Nason (Secretary), and J. Forrest for their capable efforts. He joined in Mr. Day's praise of Mr. Ingerton.

He said Labour would have to rely again on what he called 'the man with the flannel jacket' in the country. He noted the support of the Distributive Workers Union. If the workers had not been as true to their class as hoped, there must be some cause. He accused certain individuals of intimidation and misuse of the "hunger weapon." He also described some

of the most malign influences he had encountered during an election. In Greenmount Monastery Schools, he and Ald. Kenneally encountered armed Irish military in the polling booth—a troubling sight. Armed military even escorted voters to the booths. He had also learned that soldiers in civilian clothing had been allowed to vote. He had no wish to disenfranchise anyone, but there was a suggestion that everything had not been above board. He wished to avoid recriminations, but hoped their cause would yet triumph (applause).

Mr. O'Sullivan (Distributive Workers) remarked that with the Irish question still unsettled, the election had taken a distinctly political tone. Organised labour, along with farmers and business people, in his view, had been left behind. Still, they should not despair. He claimed that they must persevere in both the industrial and political courses they had embarked upon, and in the end, all would be well. These remarks were met with an applause.

Ald. Kenneally echoed the kind words spoken about the workers of the distributive trades, and those who had supported Labour in the city. He believed the election had been conducted properly, aside from the issue raised by Mr. Anthony. They had to accept the decision of the electorate. No improper influence had been used to win votes. As to the reasons behind their defeat, he would refrain from comment in front of the Press, but he suggested that this setback might, in time, prove to be the best thing that had ever happened to the working classes of Cork.[262]

As discussed in an article of the '*Jacobin*,' although the Civil War was not a class struggle in a direct manner, it was significantly influenced by the social turmoil of Ireland's national revolution. The more orthodox factions in Irish society united in support of the Free State, perceiving the republicans who rejected the Anglo-Irish Treaty as a menace to the existing order. Following a conclusive triumph for the pro-Treaty faction, the authorities of the nascent state transformed it into a bastion of social conservatism. In July

[262] *Cork Examiner 31/8/1923*

1922, delegates of the nascent, hardline Communist Party of Ireland (CPI) convened in London with Comintern envoy Mikhail Borodin, who contended that it was "truly absurd to oppose the Free State on an emotional basis" and directly enquired of the anti-Treaty leaders: "What, indeed, is their purpose for wanting a Republic?" Borodin and the Irish 'communists' together formulated a social program aimed at garnering support for the anti-Treaty stance and establishing a Republic founded on state ownership, alongside proposed significant enhancements in the conditions for workers and smaller farmers. Liam Lynch, the IRA's chief of staff at that moment in time, subsequently convened with members from the CPI. Despite treating them amicably, he did not embrace their suggested plan. Nonetheless, that initiative permeated prisons housing anti-Treaty militants through copies of the CPI's publication, the '*Workers' Republic*.' It significantly impacted the prominent republican Liam Mellows, who explicitly recognised that obligation in his "Notes from Mountjoy," a vital work for subsequent generations of republicans.[263]

In Ken Loach's Cannes-winning film '*The Wind that Shakes the Barley*,' which takes place in County Cork during this period, the characters' opposition to the Anglo-Irish Treaty distinctly reflects the views of Anti-Treaty republicans such as Liam Mellows and Peadar O'Donnell. By the film's conclusion, a counter-revolutionary backlash against the burgeoning land and labour movement following the revolution is firmly established, shaping the seemingly re-branded establishment framework for the Irish Free State.[264]

In the film, the character of Damian (played by Cillian Murphy), during an IRA meeting in rural Co. Cork, opines that:

> *"If we ratify this treaty, we will destroy the two most precious gifts that we won with this last election. One, being a mandate for complete freedom, not a compromised freedom. The second,*

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[263] *The Jacobin 28/6/2022*

[264] *The Jacobin 17/3/2025*

> *being a Democratic Programme in which is enshrined the priority - the public welfare over private welfare. This treaty will copper-fasten the hold of the powerful over the poor, because there will be a Governor-General who'll have our puppet parliament on a leash. It'll be business as usual, with workers tied to a shift at a factory and fellas begging for jobs."*[265]

As described by OpenDemocracy, in another emblematic scene, "a bullying, authoritarian, reactionary priest" upholds the Treaty, and reads out loud, with disdain, a proclamation made by the Anti-Treatyites:

> "*Under the Republic, the lands of the aristocracy who live in luxury in London will be seized and divided up amongst landless workers and small farmers. All industry and agriculture will be controlled by the State for the workers' and farmers' benefit.*"[266] [267]

As contemporary articles published by the University of Vienna, '*New Politics,'* and the British Film Institute highlight, Ken Loach's work highlights the left-leaning tendency (to varying degrees) that was present in the more radical Anti-Treaty IRA, with one of the characters proclaiming that (as aforementioned), if the Treaty was to be ratified, the socialistic Democratic Programme would fall through, and that, as a result, "all we're changing is the accents of the powerful, and the colour of the flag."[268] [269] [270] This is further

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[265] *Laverty, P (2006). Wind that Shakes the Barley, The: A Screenplay. Galley Head Press*

[266] *The Wind that Shakes the Barley - Church Scene. YouTube.com*

[267] *The Wind That Shakes the Barley: Ken Loach and Irish History (2007). OpenDemocracy*

[268] *Salhenegger, K (2012). 'The Depiction of the Irish Countryside in Irish Film.' University of Vienna*

[269] *Jacobsen, K (2007). 'The Wind That Shakes the Barley.' New Politics XI, No. 3.*

[270] *'The Crying of the Wind' (2012). British Film Institute*

supported by Prof. Brian Hanley's '*The IRA, 1926-1936*,' in which leading IRA commanders from the Counties of Cork, Kerry and Westmeath (Sean Mitchell, J.J Sheehy, Tom Maguire), at the 1933 General Army Convention (GAC) quipped "what are we fighting for, is it just to put up another flag?" This cry most certainly reflected a more general, slightly left-wing focus on social justice, however, with full-blown communism actually not held by all in the organisation, despite the fact that the IRA's chief-of-staff, Moss Twomey, actively sought support from the hard-left Soviet Union. Nonetheless, further influences were evident in the IRA's agenda. The IRA was partially influenced by the Distributist views formulated by English Catholic scholars G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc. There was a significant interest in the concepts of Social Credit, popularised by Clifford Douglas. These views emphasised the community over that of class, supported private ownership, yet were, importantly, profoundly critical of capitalism. Distributism also possessed the merit of asserting Christian, particularly Catholic, origins. Hanley highlights that the IRA increasingly described the capitalist system as 'pagan and unchristian.' A significant emphasis was placed on the necessity of regulating credit and the financial system. Twomey had contended that banking was "the cornerstone of the Imperialist system" and advocated for its dismantlement. Prof. Hanley also notes that the participation of even Fianna Fáil councillors in organisations linked to the Comintern provided them with a degree of protection against anti-communist criticism. This elucidates the IRA leadership's choice to initiate the "unequivocally socialist" Saor Éire. The IRA, as the pre-eminent revolutionary organisation in the nation, had a segment of its leadership already inclined towards socialism, making it amenable to communist discourse, especially when adorned with allusions to historical republican figures. Twomey, MacBride, and Jim Killeen, among others, were not totally ideologically devoted to communism, but were receptive to ideas that tackled social inequities, and

potentially revitalised a stagnating IRA.[271] [272] At the aforementioned 1933 General Army Convention, as outlined in the already cited '*A History of the Irish Working Class*,' it was proposed to the IRA Convention of 1933 that it prepare to make the Anti-Treaty IRA the main alternative to Fianna Fáil by declaring:

> *"Our allegiance to the Republic of Ireland, based on production and distribution for use and not for profit, in which the exploitation of labour of human beings with all its attendant miseries and insecurity shall not be tolerated."*

A contemporary issue of '*An Phoblacht*' acknowledges that the so-called 'left' faction within the IRA leadership advocated for the cause to focus on social and economic issues.[273] As Cillian Murphy's character (Damian) says in '*The Wind that Shakes the Barley*':

> "*It's easy to know what you are against, but quite another to know what you are for*."[274]

Even a 2023 RTÉ history feature by Gavin Foster recognises that a "class-war" dimension was part of the conflict between the National Government and the Anti-Treaty IRA during the Civil War of 1922-1923. As John Dorney noted in 'The Irish Story,' Foster emphasised in his academic work, '*The Irish Civil War and Society*,' that genuine class tensions—where opposing economic interests erupted into violence—played a significant role. In rural areas, landless people often seized land amid the turmoil, sometimes under the protection of the Anti-Treaty IRA. Meanwhile, government leaders like Kevin O'Higgins and Patrick Hogan feared that society was descending into disorder. In response, they created the Special Infantry Corps, effectively a state-controlled

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[271] *Hanley, B (2002). 'The IRA, 1926-1936.' Irish Academic Press*

[272] *Quill-Manley, T (2025). 'What Are We Fighting For - Is It to Just Put Up Another Flag?' Westmeath Independent 12/7/2025*

[273] *An Phoblacht 13/8/2020*

[274] *Grieger, C (2012). 'A Great and Terrible Beauty.' Central College, Iowa*

paramilitary force designed to manage disturbances that were too severe for the newly established Civic Guard but fell outside the main military campaign. So concerned were Free State ministers about what they perceived as social "anarchy" that they formed an entirely new Army Corps to address it. Its most notable operation involved suppressing a farm labourers' strike in County Waterford, during which its troops came into armed conflict with local IRA units supporting the striking workers.[275] [276]

A paper by EUSTORY also declares that, subsequent to the civil war, the Anti-Treaty IRA became increasingly pro-Soviet. In 1925, a delegation was dispatched to the Soviet Union to confer with its officials, during which the IRA consented to relay intelligence regarding the US and UK to the Soviets, in return for financial support and armaments. The snooping agreement existed until 1930.[277] Peadar O'Donnell and Frank Ryan, known as particularly far-left socialists (Ryan has been noted by the UK National Archives as an active communist), had also served as the editors of the IRA's print organ, 'An Phoblacht.'[278] [279] As highlighted in the 'Irish Left Archive,' O'Donnell and Ryan were also key founders of the IRA-sponsored communist organisation titled 'Saor Éire' in 1931. As Jonathan Hammil notes in 'Saothar,' following the Civil War, a persistent absence of a defined socio-political identification amid escalating class conflicts led to the almost moribund condition of the IRA. Government documentation indicated that those seeking to

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[275] Foster, G (2023). 'What does the Civil War really tell us about social divisions in the early 1920s? A three minute guide.' https://www.rte.ie/history/2023/0222/1358246-a-three-minute-guide-to-social-class-and-the-civil-war-divide/

[276] 'Book Review: The Irish Civil War and Society, Politics Class and Conflict.' The Irish Story 16/9/2025.

[277] 'Left-wing Movements in Europe through Time.' EUSTORY History Campus (2017).

[278] O'Rourke, P (2016). 'Peadar O'Donnell.' An Phoblacht

[279] Frank RYAN, alias Frank RICHARDS. KV 2/1291. UK National Archives (2003).

sustain the IRA needed to seek backing derived from motivations beyond the customs of Irish home-rule. They discovered this support within the extensive movement opposing the system of solely private property and enterprise. Furthermore, Hammil also highlights that all IRA units were officially and dually regarded as functional branches of Saor Éire. The Saor Éire programme outlined comprehensive plans for the socio-economic transformation of Ireland into what it called a "Workers' Republic." Among its key proposals were the confiscation of agricultural land, the abolition of private property, and the nationalisation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange. The programme also combined hardline socialist principles with commitments to promoting the Irish language and cultural heritage. Saor Éire soon became the focus of a 'Red Scare', effectively associating republicanism with communism in the public imagination. In July 1931, Seán MacBride BL was arrested in possession of IRA documents, including the full text of the Saor Éire programme. The authorities reacted with alarm, stating that the discovery "appears to mark the definite union of the IRA with communism in this state." Hammil notes that a Department of Justice memorandum emphasised the extent of the overlap between the two groups, describing Saor Éire as "frankly communistic" and noting that its principal organisers were all "prominent members of the IRA."[280] [281] As Prof. Brian Hanley notes, Seán MacBride would go as far to remark that he was prepared to "go the whole hog for the Workers' Republic." Moss Twomey, who would also serve as the IRA's chief-of-staff for a period, boldly stated that:

> "*If it is Communism to undo the Conquest… to destroy landlordism in its many forms and restore their heritage to the dispossessed: to enable those who produce wealth to obtain the fullest advantage of that wealth… to end robbery and exploitation by a privileged minority: then Tone, Emmet, Mitchel, Lalor, Connolly, Pearse and Mellows were*

[280] *'Saor Éire'. Irish Left Archive.*

[281] *Hammil, J. (1995). 'Saor Éire And The IRA: An Exercise In Deception?' Saothar*

Communists, and the Irish Republican Army is a Communist organisation."[282]

The IRA, in the wake of the Civil War until the mid-1930s, grappled with its identity within Irish society. The era was characterised by internal discord on its fundamental objective, with its views being intricate and diverse. Hanley also mentions that "for a period it enthused about the Soviet Union and was the Comintern's closest ally in Ireland, while a few years later it would deny charges of communist influence." A strong rift would also open between the IRA and Fianna Fáil in the 1930s. The IRA offered to help strikers during a transport industrial dispute in Dublin circa. 1935. The IRA even had to write a letter to the Dublin Trades Council denying that it instigated the strike in the first place.[283] As per a historical article by the '*Southern Star*,' during the 1920s, the IRA participated in multiple incidents pertaining to land agitation.[284]

According to Gavin Foster, a "proletarianisation" of the Cork IRA can be detected from 1922 onwards, when volunteers and officers, formerly composed of merchants and farmers' sons, were being replaced by unskilled or semi-skilled workers. However, Foster also notes that the ideological and social dynamics are "notoriously complicated."[285]

As Kirwan notes in the already cited '*The Threshold of a Newer Movement*,' attendees at James Connolly commemorations during the 1920s and 1930s had included IRA members as among those present.

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[282] Hanley, B (2001). 'Moss Twomey, Radicalism, and the IRA, 1931-33: A Re-assessment'. Saothar

[283] Browne, DS (2013). 'Joining the Movement: Tradition and Ideology in the IRA.' NUI Maynooth.

[284] Southern Star 3/7/2017

[285] Foster, G (2008). 'Class Dismissed? The Debate over a Social Basis to the Treaty Split and Irish Civil War.' Saothar

Additionally, in '*Radicals and the Republic: Socialist Republicanism in the Irish Free State 1925-1937*' by Richard English, it is again stressed how the 1930s opened with an intense dialogue about social radicalism within the republican struggle. In November 1930, Moss Twomey, the Irish Republican Army's chief of staff, issued a draft constitution entitled 'The Sovereignty of the People: Suggestions for a Constitution for an Irish Republic.' In it, he outlined that the country or community possessed extensive rights over natural resources and economic activity. Twomey's proposals ignited vigorous debate, particularly around the question of private property.[286]

In October 1923, the Council of the Cork Industrial Development Association (I.D.A.) convened a general meeting to discuss the situation created by the strikes in the city, with a view to finding some means of ending the disruption, which is rapidly strangling trade in both the city and the port.

In addition to the representatives of the Employers' Federation and the various trade unions, delegates were present from the Cork Farmers' Union, Munster Agricultural Society, Commercial Travellers' Association, Munster Bank Managers, the Vintners' Association, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (I.N.T.O.), the Gaelic Athletic Association (G.A.A.), Sinn Féin Executives, Cork Corporation, the County Council, and the Cork Workers' Council.

The proceedings were held in private, but an official report stated that a remarkable spirit of goodwill and harmony prevailed. After a lengthy discussion, the following motion was adopted by a majority, with an amendment having been defeated:

> *"That a committee be appointed to work in collaboration with Professor O'Rahilly, T.D., for a speedy settlement of the*

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[286] English, R (1994). 'Radicals and the Republic: Socialist Republicanism in the Irish Free State 1925-1937'. Oxford University Press.

various lock-outs and strikes in Cork. The committee shall consist of six members:

– Councillor, M. O'Cuill (Quill)
– F. Daly, Shandon Margarine Factory
– M. J. Nagle, cattle dealer
– J. Curtin, auditor
– F. Crowley, Moore and Co.
– M. O'Herlihy, Secretary, Cork I.D.A."

It was noted that the representatives of the employers did not take part in the vote.[287]

In January 1924, a mass meeting of County Cork railway workers was held in the Mechanics' Hall, Grattan Street, at 1.30 o'clock. Mr. P. Murphy, Secretary of Cork No. 2 Branch, National Union of Railwaymen (N.U.R.), presided, and there was a large attendance—the hall being well filled.

A deputation from the Cork Workers' Council—consisting of Messrs. George Nason (President), T. Walsh and G. Duncan (Secretary)—appeared before the meeting. They asked the railwaymen to contribute towards refunding Alderman James Daly the amount he was obliged to pay in connection with legal expenses incurred over the seat on the Harbour Board. Mr. Nason had been elected to this seat by the Corporation, but it was successfully claimed by the Cobh Council. The Chairman assured the deputation that the matter would be addressed at the branch meetings, and he was confident that every member of the N.U.R. would do what was expected of him (applause).

A delegate asked who had assisted the railwaymen when they spent eight or nine months last year walking the streets. The Chairman ruled that the delegate was not in order. The deputation then withdrew. The Chairman said he was very pleased to see such a strong turnout of railwaymen gathered to hear their Irish Secretary, Mr. Bermingham, and Mr. Gore of the National Union of Railwaymen. All were aware that the railway companies, through their directors and general

[287] *Irish Independent 5/10/1923*

managers, had made demands on the unions: to extend the working day from eight to nine, ten, and in some cases twelve hours. The companies also wanted to eliminate overtime, night rates for night duty, and Sunday rates for Sunday duty. On top of all that, they were seeking a reduction in wages.

The N.U.R., it was asserted, was the only union that could claim credit for having secured the eight-hour day, and it intended to fight to the last ditch to preserve it (applause). Regarding overtime, the railwaymen's policy was eight hours' work for eight hours' pay. If the companies couldn't organise the work within those hours, they would have to pay overtime. If they refused, the men would simply work eight hours and no more. This was met with applause. As to night duty—if the companies couldn't manage without night shifts, they would have to pay for it. Regarding Sunday work, the railwaymen recognised that some service was necessary for holidaymakers and others. However, if the public wanted Sunday recreation, they must be willing to pay for it. As for wages, it was clear that current rates were nearly back to pre-war levels, despite the high cost of living. The same people who owned the railways also owned the shops and businesses. When they reduced the cost of their goods, railwaymen might then consider a wage reduction.

There was another important aspect of the situation: a number of railwaymen had mistakenly joined other unions outside the N.U.R. However, many had since corrected that error and returned. The Chairman urged the rest to follow suit. Unity was their only hope of resisting the railway companies. The N.U.R. catered for all grades of railway workers—from the Chief Clerk in the General Manager's Office down to the office boy. He appealed to all railwaymen to return to the union that had secured every concession since the national agreement. It was the N.U.R. that had led them out of industrial slavery. During the railway break-up, some men were coerced into joining other unions just to get a day's work on the quays. If proper trade union spirit had existed, a man holding a clear N.U.R. card should have been entitled to work without needing to join another union. In conclusion, he said the railwaymen were not seeking strife or

trouble with the companies—but if it was forced upon them, they would meet it (applause).

Mr. McGlynn said that in the past, he had urged men to leave the N.U.R. due to its apathy. Now, he encouraged them to return. Since then, the N.U.R. had awakened, and the apathy was now all on the other side. The policy proposed before the Railway Commission in 1922 by Cork railwaymen, who were then in the Transport Union, was for the men, the public, and railway managers to address issues as they arose. Though nothing had come of that suggestion, the N.U.R. had since achieved more than had ever been advocated before the Commission (applause). He had recently visited Tralee and was struck by the unanimity and enthusiasm with which former Transport Union members there had decided to rejoin the N.U.R.

Mr. J. Walsh said that the eight-hour day was one of the greatest achievements won by any group of workers. Whatever else happened, they must fight to retain that right. This assertion was met enthusiastically by the audience. New grievance-handling machinery, coming into force within the next week, would give every railwayman a chance to have his complaint investigated—through various stages from local departmental committees, to the Irish Wages Board. A grievance would be reviewed at each level, and if a man still failed to have it resolved, then there likely wasn't much merit in it. This new system, he believed, would revolutionise their way of life. His own company, it was claimed, had tried to sidestep the national agreement by forcing vulnerable men to accept four days of leave instead of the six agreed upon.[288]

In February 1924, Mr. Richard Sidney Anthony was elected chairman of the Cork Workers' Council.[289]

At a March 1924 meeting of the Cork Workers' Council, at which a fairly large number of delegates were present, was addressed on behalf of the Irish Protectionist League by

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[288] *Cork Examiner 7/1/1924*

[289] *Irish Independent 2/2/1924*

Messrs. Seán Milroy, T.D., T. O'Donnell, B.L., and T. S. Lawlor. The deputation also included Mr. M. O'Herlihy, Secretary of the Cork Incorporated Chamber of Commerce. Mr. R. S. Anthony, President, opened the meeting by stating that their policy was to hear all sides on any question affecting the economic life of the nation. He wanted to make it clear that, just as they were willing to hear members of the Protectionist League that night, they would also be willing to hear its opponents—the Free Trade supporters—if such were to request a hearing. In that spirit, he extended a welcome to the delegation. He supposed that most of those present already had their minds made up on the issue, but he himself remained open to conviction, though he did have his own views.

Mr. Seán Milroy, T.D., after thanking the meeting for receiving the deputation, spoke at length on the various aspects of the issue, repeating his arguments in favour of Protection with considerable force. He especially emphasised the benefits that workers would derive from Protection, urging them to give the matter serious consideration. It was, he said, vital to the lives of workers, to civic freedom, and to everything of national importance. He asked for their support in a movement which, though still in its infancy, had already made an impact.

Mr. T. O'Donnell, B.L., supported Mr. Milroy's arguments and pointed out the benefits Protection would bring to workers, whose backing he sought. He explained that the organisation was non-political and not confined to any one class or section. Mr. T. S. Lawlor read out the League's objectives, which, he claimed, should command the support of all Irish people. Just as trade unions were organised to protect their members, the nation should be organised to protect itself from external exploitation. Protection, he said, was a very urgent and significant matter deserving of careful attention.

Mr. George Nason proposed a hearty vote of thanks to Messrs. Milroy, O'Donnell, and Lawlor. He remarked that, had it been Free Trade the gentlemen were advocating, he would not have risen to propose a vote of thanks. The

League's programme and objectives aligned closely with what the Council had long advocated. Their boot and flax factories were shut, and their tailors had no work due to imported goods. They knew the cause well. He was sure the Council would give the question serious—and probably favourable—consideration. Mr. Whedon seconded the vote of thanks.

Mr. J. Kelleher, T.C., while supporting the vote of thanks, said he remained unconvinced and still supported Free Trade. He objected to Mr. Nason's earlier remark, implying that no one would rise to thank Free Trade advocates. He suggested that a formal debate on the topic—Protection versus Free Trade in Ireland—would help members make a more informed decision. He welcomed Mr. Milroy, Mr. Lawlor, and Mr. O'Donnell, just as he would welcome anyone proposing ways to benefit workers. He fully supported the vote of thanks.

Mr. Nason clarified that his point had been that he himself would not have proposed a vote of thanks had the speakers been advocating Free Trade. Mr. Day also supported the vote of thanks and noted that the Council was always ready to hear deputations on public matters, especially those affecting workers' welfare. However, he regretted that they had not received more notice of the meeting, which would have allowed them to prepare questions and counterarguments. Mr. Hickey said he, too, had not been convinced.

The President concluded by saying it was a pleasure to convey the vote of thanks to the speakers. Like Mr. Day, he regretted the lack of notice, as it was originally believed the deputation would not attend that night. He thanked each speaker for their excellent, well-reasoned, and logical addresses. Of course, he claimed, it did not mean that everyone present would immediately adopt Protection as their fiscal stance. Personally, he was not a full-fledged Protectionist, though he believed in it with certain limitations. He cited a recent case in which a small tariff resulted in English tobacco firms establishing several factories in Ireland, thereby creating employment. He said the Council had learned something from the evening's discussion and that he

remained open to education and enlightenment on such matters. He fully endorsed the vote of thanks.[290]

In April 1924, the effects of the Government's railway proposals were described as a source of grave concern to commercial and shipping interests in Cork and the South of Ireland generally. Active steps were being taken to ensure the views of the Southern business community were made known, with the aim of securing such amendments to the Bill as would safeguard Southern interests. With this objective in mind, a very representative meeting was held at the Cork Harbour Board offices to consider the Bill. Mr. J. J. Horgan, Chairman of the Harbour Board, presided. The bodies represented at the meeting included Cork Corporation, Cork Harbour Board, The Incorporated Chamber of Commerce and Shipping, Cork Chamber of Commerce, Cork I.D.A., The Employers' Federation, Cork Workers' Council, Irish Cattle Trade Association, South of Ireland Cattle Trade Association, and local shipping companies.

After considerable discussion, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

> *"In view of the vital and far-reaching importance of the proposed railway scheme, this meeting, representative of the above bodies, unanimously requests the Government to postpone proceeding with the Railways Bill for a reasonable time in order to give the South of Ireland community an opportunity to consider the details and draft amendments, if necessary."*

The meeting further appointed a committee composed of representatives from the aforementioned bodies, together with the legal advisers of the Harbour Board, the Corporation, the County Council, and the shipping companies, in co-operation with other parties in the South of Ireland, to consider the Bill and draft any amendments

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[290] *Cork Examiner 15/3/1924*

deemed advisable. A copy of the resolution was ordered to be forwarded to President Cosgrave.[291]

Mr R. S. Anthony (Chairman) presided at a May 1924 meeting of the Cork Workers' Council. The President spoke at some length about the meeting of the Cork city branch of the Irish Labour Party, held at St. Francis T.A. Hall last Monday evening. He congratulated the delegates and workers generally on their magnificent attendance, with the spacious hall filled to its utmost capacity. It was a worthy tribute to the principal speaker of the evening, Mr Tom Johnson, T.D., leader of the Irish Labour Party in the Dáil, whose work has been followed appreciatively in Cork city. He asserted that the Labour Party, though small in numbers in the Dáil, had directed their efforts towards the betterment and up-liftment of the people as a whole. While they had not been as successful as hoped, there was optimism that with increased representation, many desired reforms advantageous to workers would be achieved.

Mr Kiely inquired if Mr Johnson's address could be published in full, as many were unable to attend and were very anxious to read it. The President agreed that this would be most desirable and excellent propaganda, though the cost of producing a verbatim report and publication would need to be considered. Other delegates expressed the opinion that the address should be published in pamphlet form, in full. Votes of condolence were passed to the relatives of the late Mr Liam Cronin (carpenters) and to Mr J. F. Nolan (Typographical) on the death of his wife.[292]

At a June 1924 meeting of the Cork Workers' Council, presided over by the President, Mr R. S. Anthony, he stated that, as most delegates were aware, a matter of vital interest to the workers and the citizens generally was currently pending. This concerned the dispute over demarcation between the carpenters and plasterers regarding the fitting of Trafford tiles. The question had first arisen in 1921, when,

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[291] *Irish Independent 28/4/1924*

[292] *Cork Examiner 31/5/1924*

after careful consideration, it was decided that this work belonged to the carpenters. Continuing, the President said it would indeed be regrettable if anything occurred that caused a stoppage of work at this time. Cork had endured enough trouble already, and the workers had borne the brunt of it. It would be bad enough, he suggested, if work were held up by a lockout or other aggressive action by employers or employees, but that men should be thrown idle over a dispute of this nature was a sorry state of affairs. He understood that representatives from each of the affected bodies had met with the Ministry of Labour, with Professor O'Rahilly and the Executive Officer of the Ministry also present. The following proposals were put forward by Professor O'Rahilly:

> *"(a) Would the carpenters and plasterers agree to allow the Federation to decide whether the plasterers' delegates at the meeting of the Federation which decided the question of Trafford tiles were properly accredited?*
> *(b) If the Federation decides that those delegates were properly accredited, would both carpenters and plasterers admit that the decision is valid?*
> *(c) If the Federation decides that it is not proven that these plasterers' delegates were properly accredited, would the carpenters and plasterers agree to leave their inter-trade dispute over Trafford tiles to the final decision of either—*
>
> > *(1) The Cork Building Trades Operatives' Federation, in accordance with Rule G, Section (4); or*
> > *(2) An arbitrator or arbitrators, to be mutually agreed upon by the two societies, or, in the absence of agreement, to be nominated by the Federation."*

The President hoped that the contending parties would recognise their responsibilities to their fellow workers and fellow citizens, and come to an understanding to continue working until the matter was referred to arbitration, or to a tribunal mutually agreed upon, with both sides agreeing to abide by its decision. He appealed to all concerned not to say or do anything that would prejudice an amicable settlement, and additionally reminded the employers that they also had responsibilities, and should not victimise other operatives in

the industry because of a dispute involving one section of the building trades.

The Vice-Chairman, Mr. E. Fitzgerald, said that the matter had not arisen over Trafford tiles, but due to a dispute between the plasterers and builders over the manufacture of fibrous plaster slabs. As a result, the plasterers had withdrawn their men from one job in the city. They then revived their old grievance about the Trafford tiles and threatened to withdraw their men if the work was given to carpenters. Consequently, the employers had threatened a lockout of all the building trades.

Messrs Weldon, Walsh, Nason, and Barry also spoke, condemning both the plasterers' actions and the employers' threatened lockout. It was eventually decided, on the motion of Mr Nason, seconded by Mr Hickey, to send a deputation consisting of two members of the Council, together with the President and Secretary of the Building Trades Federation, to meet the employers regarding the threatened lockout.[293]

At a July 1924 meeting of the Cork Workers' Council, Mr R. S. Anthony, President, occupied the chair, and there was a fair attendance of delegates. A letter was read from Mr Wm. Ellis, thanking the Council for their vote of sympathy to him in his recent bereavement. It was ordered that the letter be inserted in the minutes. A letter was received from the Life Insurance Workers' Union, Cork branch, regarding the strike in the Britannic Life Insurance Co., stating that every other council had passed a resolution promising support and sympathy with the workers, and that they had not seen in the Press that the Cork Council had passed such a resolution.

The Chairman said that at a previous meeting, a resolution was passed promising the support of the Council to the insurance and financial workers on strike. A resolution of the Dublin Workers' Council in that connection was also adopted, and he thought this had appeared in the Press. In answer to a question by Mr Wade (Postmen's section), the Chairman said he wished to refer briefly to the unfortunate

[293] *Cork Examiner 21/6/1924*

crisis in the building industry, which they thought they had heard the last of that week. There appeared to be some misunderstanding, which he hoped would soon be cleared up, and as a result all the plasterers of the city, no matter to which section they belonged, would soon be at work again. On Tuesday evening last, at the request of a number of plasterers, he attended a meeting at which the Chairman of the Building Operatives' Federation, as well as representatives of the joiners and plasterers, were present. The plasterers present—four in number—stated that they represented 60 per cent of the plasterers of the city. The whole question was gone into very carefully, and after a discussion lasting for over two hours, the plasterers' representatives agreed that the question of the fixing of the Trafford tiles should be referred to a joint Industrial Council of the building trade, work to be resumed in the meantime without prejudice to the claim of either side. "Let me say," he continued:

> *"that I and those associated with me attended this meeting at some personal inconvenience, and with only one desire, namely, to see the whole affair settled amicably and honourably, and that a resumption of work should take place at the earliest possible moment. I recognised the seriousness of the situation, and I know also that much misery and privation would result from the continued interruption in the building industry, and that many artisans and labourers who had nothing to do with the petty dispute would suffer. It was time that we in the Labour movement—those of us at any rate who had any regard for our self-respect and the honour of the movement—should say publicly what we were thinking and saying privately; and I had no hesitation in saying that there were many disruptionists, in the guise of Trade Unionists, who were a menace to organised Labour."*

There was no reason, he claimed, why the plasterers should not have been at work then, and they should have referred the whole question of Trafford tiles—or any other contentious question—to the proposed Joint Industrial Council for the building trade, and then they might, with some degree of confidence, have looked forward to an era of peace and prosperity in that industry. He added that those of the Cork Workers' Council were prepared to meet all the

Union plasterers of the city—no matter what sections—in the interests of harmony, and with that object in view—though the plasterers were not affiliated to that Council—they would place the Mechanics' Hall at their disposal on Sunday next, when they hoped an agreement would be reached.

Mr Jerh. Kelleher, T.C., referred to an item on the agenda of Friday's meeting of the city Corporation regarding the appointment of members of the Psychiatric Hospital Board, and said that Mr James Hickey had been the unanimous selection, not of one section, but of all the Labour Party in the city, for candidature to the position. He hoped that the Corporation would appoint him in succession to the previous Labour representative, Mr Robert Day. Messrs Weldon and Walsh concurred. The latter suggested that a letter to this effect should be written to the Town Clerk for the meeting of the Corporation. The Chairman said he took it that this suggestion would be carried out, and there was no necessity to second it.[294]

The annual Conference of the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress was opened in August 1924 at the Crawford Municipal Technical Institute, Cork City. Delegates from all the united organisations across Ireland were present. The Lord Mayor of Cork (Mr. Seán French), in welcoming the delegates, remarked that for some years Cork had been overweighted and had begun to sink. At that moment, however, he was glad to say that the sinking process had been delayed and the city was now in a state of suspension. Some hoped it was shedding the excess weight and beginning to rise again. This was met with an applause. He expressed the hope that, with their assistance, Cork City would once more float as proudly as it had done in the past. He said business was very bad at the moment—worse than it had ever been—and he was sure the delegates would give that problem their best consideration. The City of Cork, he noted, needed a great deal of co-operation. (Hear, hear.) Labour had always been willing to give such co-operation, and he called on them to do so again at this Congress. Mr. R. S. Anthony, President of

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[294] *Cork Examiner 26/7/1924*

the Cork Workers' Council, also extended a warm welcome to the delegates.

The President (Mr. L. J. O'Duffy), in the course of his address, stated that the presence in the Minister's capital of so many delegates from every part of Ireland was striking testimony to the vitality of the Labour movement, and offered assurance that, when the testing time came, that movement would be the pivot around which the fight of the dispossessed masses—North and South—for mastery in their own land would revolve. "Last year," he said:

> *"I attempted to review the recent history of this country as I saw it, and to insist that the end goal of all our conflicts, our aims, and our efforts must depend on the recognition that the reconquest of our liberties would be incomplete and meaningless without the reconquest of all the natural resources from which the country's wealth derives. I cannot pretend to modify that view in any way. I am satisfied that it correctly expresses the conscious or subconscious purpose of the working masses of this island."*

Addressing the internal strife within the movement over the past year, Mr. O'Duffy stated that some sections had allowed themselves to become the playthings of every novel adventure, unable to distinguish between their own weaknesses and the supposed faults of those they had chosen as spokespeople. When men and women revolted against the authority of their own institutions, they not only weakened their executives in a crisis, but often forced them to rush into actions that better judgment would have rejected. Most of their defeats, he said, could be traced to this absence of loyalty, confidence, and solidarity. He insisted that if they were to preserve democracy within their unions, the best and bravest members must be elected to leadership roles and consistently supported by the rank and file. A dictatorship in the Labour and Trade Union movement—no matter how intelligent—might have some virtues that appealed to the people, but it could not offer the unique advantage of democracy: enabling the people, collectively and individually, to control their own destiny. If the working class in Ireland abandoned that power to become the personal appendage of

any group, no matter how well-intentioned, they would be forging new chains for their own enslavement.

He emphasised that, in his view, never before in Ireland had unity among progressive forces been so essential. While Labour had effaced itself in 1920 in the interest of national unity, by 1922 it had decided to assert its independence and push its own programme forward, irrespective of the emerging parties born from the Sinn Féin split. The Labour movement, he stated, could not now efface itself to accommodate any party—large or small—and must stay on the path towards achieving its aims. It remained, as it had four years earlier, a Republican and anti-imperialist movement. There had been changes in tactics, but not in purpose. "It may be well," said Mr. O'Duffy:

> *"to draw attention to the potential need to revise our stance in the face of imminent developments. If England, even by implication, declared the Anglo-Irish Treaty no longer inviolate and proceeded to enact qualifying legislation because it could not—or would not—compel Sir James Craig's compliance, we might be justified in pressing the logic of that situation. Such circumstances could offer an opportunity for appeasing national tensions at home, and Congress might find the moment ripe to determine that, as far as this movement was concerned, solidarity between workers North and South would triumph over all divisions."*

On unemployment, Mr. O'Duffy reported that about 80,000 men were jobless, with another winter of poverty and hunger looming. Sir James Craig had promised a year earlier to resolve the issue in Belfast, but it remained unresolved. In Dublin, the Government's solution was to employ a few dozen men here and there, paying wages that had become a national benchmark for wage cuts. The country, he warned, was deteriorating further, which was particularly disturbing given the immense idle wealth being hoarded. The wealthy, who lived off the earnings of those now unemployed or underpaid, were growing richer by the day.

A responsible and determined Government would tap every available resource to provide employment and finance

substantial national reconstruction. A six-hour day, perhaps even a five-day week, raising the school-leaving age to 16, and granting pensions at 60 (as often demanded by Congress), would remove many from the labour market and create space for those who had been out of work for years. Mr. O'Duffy proposed large-scale reconstruction projects and claimed there was more than enough money in the banks to fund them many times over.

The National Executive's report was taken up regarding unemployment benefits. Delegates voiced frustrations over difficulties individual members faced in obtaining payments from local exchanges. Mr. Gorman (Limerick) criticised the "demoralising dole," and said it would be better for the Government to redirect benefit funds toward public works projects that would ease unemployment. Mr. Thomas Johnson disagreed, arguing that the payments were not "doles" but insurance entitlements—(a claim met with loud laughter)—and that using those funds for public works would worsen conditions for the unemployed. He stressed that the insurance fund should remain intact. Mr. R. J. Bell (Dublin Distributive Workers) asked if anything could be done about congestion at Dublin's Labour Exchange, likening it to the "Charge of the Light Brigade." He suggested establishing two exchanges—one for North and another for South Dublin.

Senator Farren referenced the 1920 Act that allowed men to sign up and receive benefits through their unions, calling for broader adoption of that practice. Turning to the minority report of the Agricultural Commission, Mr. Norton (Post Office Workers) lamented that Labour delegates gave extensive evidence to Government commissions only to have their conclusions dismissed. He described this as a stalling tactic by the Government and suggested Labour should consider withdrawing from future commissions unless policies changed. Mr. Cathal O'Shannon, of the IT&GWU, agreed that the Congress should examine Labour's role on such commissions, but had disagreed with the suggestion of full withdrawal. While some believed striking or walking out was the only way to pressure governments, he argued that Labour had done excellent work on the commissions and that the

knowledge gained would be crucial when Labour came to power. Mr. A. Heron agreed with Mr. O'Shannon's views.[295]

Later that month, at the regular Cork Workers' Council convening, a resolution was passed calling upon the responsible authorities to immediately implement the Housing Act providing necessary homes for the men, as promised by the British Government when the European War ended.[296]

In September 1924, the Vice-President (Mr. E. Fitzgerald) occupied the chair of the Cork Workers' Council convening. Mr. J. Barry, H.C., drew attention to the schools and classes of the Technical Institute, which were then reopening. He had seen from a report of the committee's proceedings that, owing to the poor attendance of students, it was intended to discontinue some of the classes. This, he said, was a deplorable state of affairs, and he appealed to all members to encourage their sons and daughters to attend. He expressed the hope that, by the end of the next session, the reports would be considerably improved. The Chairman said they should recognise the importance of sending young people to these classes, as their future progress would be greatly influenced by the education they received. As Mr. Barry had noted, those in charge had felt inclined to close down some of the classes, which would be a serious hardship. Members should therefore do their utmost to ensure that their boys and girls attended, and help to achieve full classes wherever possible. The Very Rev. Dr. Thomas, O.S.F.C., also wrote to thank the Council for their kind remarks regarding his return to Ireland.[297]

Later in September, it was announced at another Cork Workers' Council meeting that the Britannic Assurance Workers' strike had been settled to the satisfaction of both sides. On behalf of his society, Mr. McCarthy (Assurance

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[295] *Derry Journal 6/8/1924*

[296] *Cork Examiner 15/8/1924*

[297] *Cork Examiner 12/9/1924*

Workers) thanked the Council and the policyholders who stood by them.[298]

At an October 1924 meeting of the Cork Workers' Council, the President, Mr. R. S. Anthony, occupied the chair. Mr. T. Kelleher, T.C., H.C., said he had attended a meeting of the Law and Finance Committee of the Corporation, at which the question of tutorial classes for workers—raised at the Council some time ago—had been discussed. It had been suggested that three members of the Workers' Council be appointed to the joint committee for the administration of the scheme. The Chairman said the thanks of the Council were due to Mr. Kelleher for his efforts. He had let no grass grow under his feet since the matter was first mentioned at the Council. He hoped the scheme would be a success, and that there would be full attendances once the lectures began. He also suggested that the joint committee be empowered to have a say in the selection of the textbooks, noting they should not be confined to orthodox materials or lecture formats. Mr. Kelleher noted that this point had also been raised at the Law and Finance Committee, and it had been suggested that subjects relevant to workers' everyday lives should be taught. Mr. J. Barry, H.C., then proposed that the President, along with Messrs. Hickey and Hurley, N.T., be appointed to the joint committee. Mr. E. Fitzgerald, T.C. (Vice-President), seconded the motion. Mr. Hickey suggested that the three officers of the Council be appointed instead. After some discussion, Mr. Barry's motion was passed unanimously.[299]

In November 1924, a conference under the auspices of the I.T. & G.W.U. was held in Connolly Hall, Cork City. The following mill workers were represented: Douglas, Blarney, and Dripsey. Mr. P. O'Brien proposed, and Mr. J. O'Brien seconded, that Mr. J. O'Reilly take the chair. Mr. D. Burns proposed, and Mr. W. Horgan seconded, that Mr. D. Healy act as secretary to the meeting. The Chairman welcomed the delegates, acknowledging the inconvenience they had faced

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[298] *Cork Examiner 19/9/1924*

[299] *Cork Examiner 11/10/1924*

in attending, and commended them for their commitment to addressing the current state of depression in the woollen trade. He emphasised that the meeting would provide an opportunity for workers from different mills to discuss trade-related matters and union issues that may arise from time to time. A lengthy discussion followed on the depressed state of the trade. The members present were unanimous in their support for Government intervention, specifically through the imposition of a tariff or other forms of protection to aid the industry. The following resolutions were unanimously adopted:

1. Proposed by Mr. W. Horgan, seconded by Mr. John M. O'Brien:

> *"Resolved—That this meeting of the Transport representatives of the woollen workers of Blarney, Douglas, and Dripsey requests the Irish Free State Government to impose a tariff on all woollen goods, tweeds, and particularly ready-made suits entering the Free State area. We believe this is the only viable means of relieving the present depression in the woollen trade. Copies of this resolution are to be sent to:*
>
> *The Ministry of Industry and Commerce*
> *The Minister for Finance*
> *The National Executive of the I.T. & G.W.U.*
> *Mr. Thomas Johnson, T.D.*
> *Mr. J. J. Walsh, T.D., Minister for Posts and Telegraphs*
> *Mr. R. Beamish, T.D.*
> *Mr. A. O'Shaughnessy, T.D.*
> *Mr. M. Egan, T.D.*
> *The Cork Workers' Council."*

2. Proposed by Mr. C. Foley, seconded by Mr. D. Gilles:

> *"That this meeting is of the opinion that the Executive of the I.T. & G.W.U. should immediately convene a meeting of representatives of woollen workers within the Free State area to address the current crisis in the trade."*

3. Proposed by Mr. P. O'Brien, seconded by Mr. D. O'Brien:

"That we appeal to the working classes and the general public to support Irish woollen mills by purchasing only Irish-manufactured tweeds. We consider it shameful that foreign cloths and ready-made suits dominate shop displays while our own looms are idle and our comrades are unemployed. Foreign producers are profiting at the expense of Irish workers and the nation. A copy of this resolution is to be sent to the Cork Workers' Council."

Following further discussion on the operation of union branches in each district and the unique challenges faced by workers in different mills, the meeting was adjourned.[300]

During late November, the President (Mr. R. Anthony) stated at a Cork Workers' Council meeting that, while some of the classes at the Cork Municipal Technical Schools were splendidly attended, he regretted that there were exceptions — notably the coach-making and cabinetmaking classes. Attendance in these classes was very poor, and the Department intended to close them down altogether. This closure would have taken place the previous week by order of the Department were it not for the President's appeal to the Technical Committee to suspend standing orders. This intervention allowed the classes an additional week or so to improve their attendance numbers. He emphasised the advantages of attending these classes and expressed satisfaction at the marked improvement in attendance at the plumbers' class. This improvement, he noted, was largely due to the deep interest shown by the President and Committee of the Plumbers' Society, who had succeeded in persuading every apprentice to attend. He hoped that the coach-makers' and cabinetmakers' societies would follow this excellent example, otherwise the Department would close their classes.
Mr. Nason commented that, in light of the widespread unemployment affecting nearly all trades — not only among men, but also apprentices — it was unrealistic to expect normal attendance at classes. However, he noted that apprentices in his trade were attending in sufficient numbers.
The President also drew attention to the importation of printed materials into the city. He observed that many of the

[300] *Cork Examiner 28/11/1924*

dead walls in Cork were plastered with coloured posters advertising dance halls and cinemas, most of which bore no imprint indicating they had been printed in Cork or even in Ireland. This, he warned, was a serious issue and contributed to the current unemployment in the city. He suggested that delegates and their friends examine the imprints on such bills to determine where they were produced, particularly when attending the events being advertised. One delegate pointed out that, during the recent Cork election, bills issued on behalf of the Government candidate were printed in Dublin. He believed this work should have been given to local Cork printers.

A letter was read from the Secretary of the Committee on Health Insurance and Medical Services in the city of Dublin, acknowledging receipt of the Council's letter dated the 15th inst. The letter stated that the Committee had already heard evidence from duly accredited representatives of the Approved Societies Association of Ireland, the Association of Trades Union Approved Societies in Ireland, and various non-associated Approved Societies. Messrs. Nason and Walsh had expressed dissatisfaction with the contents of the communication, and the Secretary was instructed to write for further particulars. Finally, attention was drawn to the large quantities of flour and bacon being imported into the country, and consumers were urged to discourage this practice in support of local produce.[301]

In December 1924, Mr. R. S. Anthony (President) occupied the chair at a meeting of the Cork Workers' Council. The usual organisations were represented. Mr. Nason stated that during a previous meeting there had been references to unemployment and the condition of Rockboro' Road. What he had said was that he would not be surprised if the Commissioner found dead pigs and dead sheep on it if he went there. He emphasised that the Sanitary Staff had no responsibility for the matter, although it may have appeared that he had criticised the sanitary officers without any reference to unemployment. The Chairman responded that

[301] *Cork Examiner 29/11/1924*

he was sure Mr. Nason had no intention of casting aspersions on the sanitary officers.

With regard to the request that local places of amusement would dedicate one night to benefit the St. Vincent de Paul Society, Mr. F. J. Pitt wrote regretting that he was unable to assist, as the Opera House was closed that week. The Secretary (Mr. Duncan) noted that a deputation was present regarding the matter and also mentioned that the Chairman of the Butter Exchange Band had offered the services of the band for such a cause. Following a proposal from Mr. McCarthy (Railway Clerks), a deputation—comprising the Council officers, Mr. Nason, and Mr. McCarthy—was appointed to meet with the proprietors of the city's cinema houses. A deputation also appeared before the Council, stating that the Lee Pipers' Band would be pleased to help in any way they could. The Chairman expressed gratitude to the deputation and confirmed they would be contacted once the project reached maturity.

On the motion of Mr. Nason, seconded by Mr. Hurley, a vote of condolence was passed to Mr. Fitzgibbon, Secretary of the Distributive Workers' Union, on the death of his mother. A letter was read from Mr. P. Monahan, Commissioner for the Borough of Cork:

> *"In reply to yours of the 12th inst., I have to inform you that 40 men were given work for the week before Christmas in addition to the ordinary staff. I was afraid that, had I announced this in advance, I would have been inundated with applications."*

Mr. McCarthy expressed dissatisfaction with this reply. He pointed out the urgent need for work in Cork and the deplorable state of the streets, which had prompted numerous complaints. Mr. Walsh stated that necessary works on Anderson's Quay would also provide considerable employment in his trade. He questioned why such work had not commenced, suggesting it may be due to a deliberate attempt to avoid expenditure. He further criticised the Commissioner for failing to address reduced wages and claimed that the Commissioner was doing little except

dismissing labourers. Referring to the City Hall proposal, Mr. Walsh argued that it was wrong to describe the building as a "luxury," particularly in a city as significant as Cork. Diverting funds meant for the City Hall to housing, while possibly helpful to his trade, would delay essential municipal improvements. In his view, housing was a national issue and the funds already earmarked for the City Hall should remain allocated to that project.

The Chairman countered Mr. Walsh's remarks, stating he doubted whether such views reflected those of the wider working class. While he personally supported the idea of a City Hall and believed that Cork City deserved a fitting building, he emphasised the desperate need for housing. He believed the majority of workers supported using the funds for housing instead. He acknowledged that housing was a national issue but also pointed out that even the British Government, with its vast resources, was struggling to fund such schemes. If the Commissioner's only major change was prioritising housing over a new City Hall, then the Council had little cause for complaint. Mr. McCarthy responded that if house-building could begin immediately, he would be in favour. However, no site had been acquired, and no arrangements made, making it likely that no construction would begin for at least twelve months. In contrast, plans for the City Hall were ready, and work could start immediately. Tradesmen were leaving for Britain to find employment, and this project could provide vital jobs at home. The Chairman agreed that if such a delay were inevitable, it would be better to proceed with the City Hall. However, if the delay could be avoided, he would prefer to see the houses built.

Mr. Fitzgerald agreed that housing was the greater need. He mentioned, with some humour, that the corporate staff were to be relocated to the Museum, requiring significant alterations. He stressed that housing shortages were acute, and addressing this issue was more urgent than a new public building. He added that contracts were already out for the rebuilding of Messrs. Cash & Co., and that Robson's Stores and the New York House would likely also be rebuilt soon. Mr. McAuliffe said the construction of 200 houses now would help fulfil Mr. J. J. Walsh's promise of 500 houses. Mr.

Kiely stated that it would be in very poor taste for the Council to oppose the proposal to prioritise housing over the City Hall. They had, he quipped, already waited three years for a new City Hall, and could afford to wait longer. He recommended that the Council publicly support the housing policy. The Chairman concluded by saying their approval of the housing proposal would depend on the work being commenced without unnecessary delay. Mr. Walsh, sceptical, noted that the phrase "as little delay as possible" was too vague and asked for more concrete assurances. The Chairman proposed that they request work to begin at the start of the New Year.[302]

In January 1925, a meeting of the Cork Railway Shopmen and representatives from other trades organisations took place at the N.U.R. rooms at the Grand Parade, Cork city centre. Reports were presented by Messrs Barry, McAuliffe, Murphy, and Spillane, who had been tasked with engaging certain influential figures in the railway and commercial sectors regarding the proposed railway amalgamation scheme. These delegates stated—according to their own observations and opinions—that several developments had raised concern among local railway workers.

They reported that, within the previous week, five railway carriages had been transferred from the Cork and Bandon Railway to Dublin for repair and re-heating, and that a boiler from the Cork and Passage Railway had also been sent away to have a new tube plate fitted. In their view, there was no sound economic justification for outsourcing this work, particularly since some of the carriages in question had originally been built on the Bandon Railway itself. From their perspective, any facility capable of building such carriages ought to be equally capable of repairing them. Similarly, they argued that the boiler repairs could have been carried out just as effectively and economically in Cork. These opinions were seen to conflict with responses previously received from the railway company and other related parties. The delegates expressed a strong belief that these decisions reflected a pattern of centralisation—or, as they described it, over-

[302] *Cork Examiner 19/12/1924*

centralisation—in favour of a particular location, to the detriment of Cork. They urged attendees to remain vigilant and proactive if they wished to resist what they viewed as an unfair and potentially damaging trend.

Following discussion of the reports, Mr. Mason (representing the vehicle builders) moved a resolution, which was seconded by Mr. Wm. Cremin of the I.E.U. The resolution, reflecting the collective opinion of those present, was passed unanimously. It called for Mr. J.J. Horgan (Chairman of the H.C.), the Lord Mayor Mr. Seán French, and Mr. R.S. Anthony (Chairman of the Cork Workers' Council) to convene a public meeting to address the amalgamation scheme and Cork's position within it.[303]

In February, another meeting of the Cork Railway Shopmen and other interested organisations was held at the N.U.R. rooms, 54 Grand Parade, Cork city centre. The meeting, chaired by Mr. R. S. Anthony, President of the Cork Workers' Council, was described by the participants as broadly representative, with delegates in attendance from 30 trade and labour bodies. These groups collectively represented over 5,000 organised workers. This gathering was one of several convened to discuss the position of the Cork railway workshops in light of the railway amalgamation scheme, which had, by that point, progressed to the stage of formally consolidating the various rail networks into the Great Southern Railways Company. Although the preliminary administrative steps were already underway, attendees expressed concern not with the formalities, but with how the reorganisation would be implemented—particularly whether Cork would receive a fair share of the increased workload the amalgamation was expected to generate. They also called for proper investment in developing the local workshops to handle that work effectively. Supporters of this position argued that Cork was not only entitled to such development but was especially well placed for it. As the largest county in the Free State, with the highest railway mileage and connections to a rich agricultural region and a world-class

[303] *Kerry News 7/1/1925*

harbour, they believed Cork should be treated as a key centre in the new railway structure.

Reports were then presented by Messrs Barry, McAuliffe, Murphy, and Spillane, who had been appointed to engage with senior figures in the railway and commercial sectors on the matter. They reported that several railway carriages from the Cork and Bandon Railway had recently been sent to Dublin for repair and re-heating, and that a boiler from the Cork and Passage Railway had also been sent away for tube plate replacement. In their view, there was no sound economic justification for removing this work from Cork, especially since some of the affected carriages had originally been constructed by the Bandon Railway itself. They argued that the local workshops should therefore be perfectly capable of repairing them. The same reasoning, they said, applied to the boiler work, which could have been carried out just as efficiently and cost-effectively in Cork.

These delegates contended that this outsourcing contradicted assurances given by the railway company and other parties, and warned that such practices reflected a pattern of centralisation—or over-centralisation—in favour of another location. They urged local workers and their representatives to remain vigilant if they wished to challenge this perceived bias. Mr. Cremin, addressing the issue from what he described as a purely economic standpoint, outlined the benefits of a fully equipped central workshop in Cork. In his view, such a facility would not only secure permanent employment for the existing workforce but could also help to reduce unemployment locally by creating further job opportunities. Mr. Nason, representing the Vehicle Builders, voiced support for the efforts made to date in protecting the interests of Cork workers. However, he argued that the time had come for more decisive action. He maintained that the issue now affected not only railway workers but also the broader community, including shopkeepers and merchants. In pursuit of that goal, Mr. Nason proposed, and Mr. Wm. Cremin of the I.E.U. seconded, the following resolution:

"That Mr. J. J. Horgan, Chairman of the H.C.; the Lord Mayor, Mr. Seán French; and Mr. R. S. Anthony, Chairman

> *of the Cork Workers' Council, be asked to convene a public meeting concerning the railway amalgamation scheme and Cork's position within it."*

The resolution was adopted unanimously. A sub-committee was then appointed to take the necessary steps to implement it.[304]

In early March of 1925, the '*Cork Examiner*' reported that the Cork Workers' Council had approved of the campaign to abolish income tax, on the basis that "the money saved be re-invested in Ireland."[305] However, a couple of weeks later, the somewhat opinionated '*Voice of Labour*' publication strongly opined that the income-tax abolition campaigners had been active in Limerick, and also allegedly succeeded in enlisting the support of Mr R. S. Anthony, Chairman of the Cork Workers' Council. The paper claims that they descended upon the Cork Workers' Council one evening, and persuaded the Council to endorse their views. Mr Anthony appeared to be immediately converted by the eloquent preaching of the abolitionists. The paper quipped that, fortunately for its good reputation, Cork had a large number of conscious trade unionists who were not as easily swayed by allegedly fantastical schemes as some of the proposals' advocates might have hoped. Since 1917, it claimed that the Cork Branch of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union had been a significant force to reckon with by the workers of the Lee—and, more recently, by the income tax campaigners. A report was later received from the Cork Branch, stating that at a weekly meeting of the Branch Committee of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, the following resolution had been unanimously passed:

> *"Resolved: That we, the Committee members of the Cork Branch of the I.T. and G.W.U., wish to inform our members, and any others concerned, that we do not endorse the Cork employers' proposal for the abolition of income tax, and we dissociate ourselves from the action taken by the Cork Workers'*

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[304] *Cork Examiner 6/2/1925*

[305] *Cork Examiner 13/3/1925*

> *Council at a recent meeting when, at the request of a deputation of Cork employers, the Council passed a resolution endorsing the employers' proposal.*
>
> *Further, we deplore the hasty and unpremeditated manner in which the Cork Workers' Council, without consultation with their colleagues in the I.L.P. and T.U. Congress, accepted such a proposal—one with far-reaching fiscal implications likely to cause further hardship to the working class. It was agreed that copies of this resolution be submitted to the press and to the National Executive Council of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union."*

That statement, the article claimed, had put the matter into perspective. The Cork Committee, in his view, had wasted no words and acted as a thoughtful, conscious labour body supposedly should. It was claimed that their response was likely to have had a healthy effect all round. Turning to the discussion held at the Cork Workers' Council, it was evident that the abolitionists had indeed presented "attractive arguments", as Mr Anthony described them. Mr T. P. Dowdall praised the workers, remarking that they were the majority of consumers and spent most of the money on essential goods. He argued that consumers bore the brunt of both income tax and corporation profits tax, and that the reduction or abolition of income tax would result in lower living costs—benefiting the working class and stimulating enterprise and employment.

It was opined that, when wages were reduced, the promised lower cost of living and increased employment failed to materialise. Mr Frank Daly was even more dramatic. Responding to arguments suggesting it would be better to reduce the price of essentials like tea and sugar, he allegedly, in the paper's opinion, presented a dire example: a wage-earner thrown out of work due to poor trade. Daly declared that it wouldn't matter "sixpence" to such a man if every tax on every article of consumption were removed—because he had no income to buy them. That, it seemed, was the crushing argument that converted Anthony. Daly likened it to a "Cleopatra"—an irresistible persuasive force. Not content

with that, he pressed on, calling for the Government to do something "heroic, dramatic, even drastic."

At one point, the paper stated that Mr J. Kelleher sensibly asked what guarantee would be given to labour that the money saved by capitalists through the proposed sixpence in the pound tax cut would be reinvested in creating employment. No clear answer appeared in the published reports, but Kelleher ultimately agreed to the resolution, adding the caveat that the saved money should be reinvested in Ireland. The article claimed that even that assurance, however, did not seem convincing to workers at Connolly Hall.

Mr Hugo Flinn joined the debate with softer words. He claimed that labour would be the principal beneficiary of income tax abolition. According to Flinn, the Government avoided the proposal because it feared that labour would not be intelligent enough to grasp the benefits and would dismiss it as a capitalist move. He argued that income tax was not just paid by the wealthy, especially in Ireland, and that tax collectors merely passed money gathered from the general public on to the Government. Flinn asserted that the true reason for the Government's hesitation was its belief in labour's ignorance. He insisted that labour had more to gain from abolition than any other class. However, after a few more debates like this one, the paper suggested that he might revise his opinion—especially when he discovered there was only one Anthony among Cork's hardened trade unionists, as they were described in the article.[306]

In April 1925, at the annual meeting of the Literary and Debating Society in Cork City, Mr. Richard Anthony gave a talk on "The Aims and Objects of Trade Unionism."[307]

In May of 1925, at a meeting of the Cork Workers' Council, presided over by Mr. R. S. Anthony, Mr. G. Nason referred to a recent press report highlighting an issue the Council had

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[306] *The Voice of Labour 28/3/1925*

[307] *Cork Examiner 28/4/1925*

previously raised—namely, the potential of Cork Barracks as a suitable site for house building. Mr. Nason noted that funding originally allocated for the City Hall had been redirected to housing purposes, and he urged that this site be used promptly to commence construction. He expressed concern about the high rents being paid in the city, stating that, regrettably, some of the profiteering was being carried out by working-class people themselves. In his view, the best remedy for this situation was to accelerate the building of new houses to reduce the severe overcrowding. The Chairman, Mr. Anthony, stated that he agreed with Mr. Nason. He reiterated that there was a designated fund for housing development, but that actual construction had not yet begun. He said it was being discussed locally that a large-scale housing scheme might soon be launched.

According to Mr. Anthony, several public-spirited individuals with financial resources were considering undertaking housing developments on a scale significant enough to offer affordable rents for working-class tenants. Whether this initiative would take the form of a limited company, fall under the direction of the City Commissioner, involve the government, or be a collaboration among all three, he said he could not yet confirm. Nonetheless, it was understood that the project was expected to commence soon. Mr. J. Barry, H.C., informed the meeting that the Commissioner had already acquired four sites, with planning underway for one of them. However, Mr. Barry expressed concern about the cost of the land, noting that one site had been purchased at £300 per acre, a price he considered excessive. He said he had previously suggested Elizabeth Fort as a more appropriate and cost-effective location. Mr. McCarthy also supported the use of Cork Barracks, arguing that developing that site could make a meaningful contribution to reducing unemployment. Mr. Barry further highlighted delays in a separate project: the construction of houses intended for British ex-servicemen. He noted that while 170 houses were planned, construction had still not begun. Following these discussions, the Council instructed the Secretary to make further inquiries into the matter.[308]

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[308] *Cork Examiner 2/5/1925*

Not long later, members of the Cork Grocers and Allied Trades Assistants' Association honoured the memory of their late chairman, Mr. John Matson, by unveiling a memorial portrait at their rooms on the South Mall. Mr. Matson had been a well-known and highly respected figure in the trade union movement. He served as chairman of the Association from its foundation and held roles on the Executive Council of the Cork Workers' Council and as Secretary of the Cork Commercial Travellers' Federation. His contributions were widely acknowledged and appreciated. The memorial ceremony was attended by a large gathering, including members of the Association and representatives from the Cork Workers' Council and Cork Commercial Travellers' Federation. Members of Mr. Matson's family were also present, including his mother, Mrs. Matson; his brothers, Mr. George Matson and Mr. Henry Matson; and his sons, Master John Matson and Master Henry Matson. The occasion was marked by a strong sense of respect and solemnity.

Mr. C. Reardon, President of the Association, presided over the event and unveiled the memorial. He described Mr. Matson as a sincere and committed trade unionist, whose selfless service to the movement would be long remembered. Mr. Matson, he said, was one of the founding members of the Association and was deeply involved in the work of both the Cork Workers' Council and the Cork Commercial Travellers' Federation. He was noted for his dedication, particularly during a significant strike in the city, where he represented the Association in negotiations. Mr. Reardon expressed the hope that the memorial would inspire others to follow the strong example that Mr. Matson had set. Mr. D. J. Clancy, Secretary, also spoke, paying tribute to Mr. Matson's commitment, energy, and ability. He praised his consistently warm and generous manner, and said his passing was deeply felt across the movement.

Additional tributes were paid by Mr. P. Murphy (organiser), Mr. J. Desmond (assistant secretary), Mr. M. Carroll (vice-president), and Mr. John Collins (former president), each of whom acknowledged Mr. Matson's invaluable service to both the Association and the wider trade union cause. Mr. J. L.

Barry, speaking on behalf of the Cork Commercial Travellers' Federation, said he was honoured to be part of the tribute. He described Mr. Matson as a man of integrity and a key contributor to the trade union movement, whose memory deserved the highest respect.

Mr. R. S. Anthony, President of the Cork Workers' Council, added his voice to the tributes. He said Mr. Matson had consistently demonstrated reliability and leadership—qualities that defined him as a model trade unionist. Mr. Anthony noted Mr. Matson's broad-minded and practical approach, and his readiness to contribute whenever called upon. Mr. G. Nason, of the Cork Workers' Council as well, also endorsed these remarks, describing Mr. Matson as one of the finest individuals to have worked in the trade union movement, and someone whose contributions would not be forgotten. Concluding the ceremony, Mr. Matson's brother and son expressed gratitude on behalf of the family for the tribute, and the many kind words spoken in memory of their immediate family member.[309]

In June, at a meeting of the Cork Workers' Council, Mr. Richard Anthony presided as Chairman. A letter was read from Mr. Monahan, the City Commissioner, indicating that he hoped to address the matter of primary school scholarships by the end of the month. The Chairman described the letter as non-committal but nonetheless somewhat satisfactory.

Continuing, Mr. Anthony stated that he understood a Commission was to be established by the Government, on the initiative of the Department of Education, to investigate the current national school curriculum, particularly regarding the teaching of Irish. He expressed a preference for the Council to discuss the broader issue of primary education at a future meeting. However, he noted with concern that among those invited to the proposed conference were national teachers, nominees of the Minister for Education, members of the Senate, and representatives of public bodies — but no mention had been made of any representation

[309] *Cork Examiner 12/5/1925*

from the working classes or from parents of school-aged children. In his view, these groups ought to have a voice in the matter. Mr. Anthony argued that the issue deserved serious attention from the Council. He claimed that, as things stood, the youth of the country were being neglected — not through any fault of the teachers, but due to the flawed system they were required to implement. He referred to recent letters in the press that highlighted the lack of genuine educational progress in schools, with children aged 13 or 14 reportedly lagging behind the standard once reached by 10- or 11-year-olds. This trend, he said, was backed by his own personal knowledge and experience.

He described the current national school programme as "urgent" but harmful, and warned that it risked producing "a nation of dunces." Although he recognised this was an unpopular position, he believed the organised working class — particularly those raising families — should take a stand against what he described as the scandalous nature of the present system. He cited the example of geography being taught through Irish as particularly problematic, since many parents could not support their children's learning without a knowledge of the language. He claimed that some boys aged 14 or 15 were now so far behind that they could not perform basic tasks such as addressing envelopes in commercial settings. He also criticised the practice of extending teachers' holidays to allow them to learn Irish, calling it a scandal.

Mr. Anthony further alleged that appointments in the Department of Education were being made based on political considerations rather than merit or teaching experience. He said that individuals who had avoided personal risk during past conflicts had now secured comfortable positions of authority, including as inspectors. These same individuals, he claimed, were now undermining the work of teachers and damaging children's education. He urged the Council to treat the matter with seriousness and to ensure that the voices of working people were heard before any further decisions were made. He concluded by saying, "We want a decent education for our children — not one where they are filled with Irish which, God alone knows, they may never need to use."

Mr. Nason and Mr. Kelleher expressed agreement with Mr. Anthony's remarks. It was agreed that a meeting of the Executive of the Council would be convened shortly, to which teachers would be invited. The Executive was instructed to report back to the full Council at a subsequent special meeting. The Council also resolved to urge Mr. Johnson, Secretary of the Irish Labour Party, to press for working-class representation at the forthcoming education conference.[310]

In July, at a meeting of the Cork Workers' Council, Mr. R. S. Anthony, the Chairman, opened the proceedings by expressing the Council's deep regret at the sudden and tragic death of Edward Madden, son of Mr. William Madden, a long-standing and respected delegate to the Council. Edward Madden had sustained fatal injuries in an accident at one of the city's sawmills. Mr. Anthony said it was with great sorrow that he had read the announcement of the young man's passing, and he was certain he spoke for all members when he had extended their heartfelt and deepest sympathy to Mr. Madden and his family. Mr. K. Fitzgerald, Vice-President of the Council, proposed a formal vote of sympathy. He said everyone had been deeply saddened by news of the terrible accident involving Mr. Madden's young son, who had been working with a circular saw at the time. Mr. Fitzgerald described Edward as a bright and promising young man who was very capable in his trade. He noted that beyond the shock of the accident itself, the tragedy of raising a child only to lose him so suddenly was a cruel blow to any parent.

Mr. George Nason seconded the motion. He remarked that since joining the Council, Mr. Madden had proven himself to be one of its most dedicated and effective members. No delegate, he said, had contributed more during their time on the Council. It was particularly heartbreaking that Edward's life had been cut short just as he was beginning to support himself and contribute to his family. Mr. Nason added that Edward had been well liked by everyone on the Council and by all who had known him. As a mark of respect, he

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[310] *Cork Examiner 6/6/1925*

suggested that the Council adjourn its meeting after completing only the most urgent business. Mr. Hurley, supporting the proposal, described the loss as a terrible blow to someone so young and full of promise. Since his election to the Council, Edward had proven himself to be upright, honest, and intelligent, and his absence would be deeply felt. The motion of sympathy was passed in silence, with all members standing. The meeting was then adjourned following the conclusion of essential business.[311]

In August, a meeting was held in the Trades Hall in support of the candidacy of Mr Edward Fitzgerald, Vice-President of the Cork Workers' Council, for the upcoming Seanad elections. Mr R. S. Anthony, who presided over the meeting, remarked that for some time the working classes had shown little interest in matters that should have been, in their view, of vital concern to them. However, he felt that this apathy had now begun to lift, and he hoped this renewed sense of engagement would be reflected at the ballot box.

Addressing common criticisms of the Labour Party, Mr Anthony said it had often been falsely claimed that the party did not support order and stable government. He rejected that assertion outright, stating that Labour had consistently stood for order, good governance, and a sound agricultural policy. Furthermore, the party was firmly committed to securing a living wage for all workers—not merely one that provided for subsistence, but one that allowed a man to support a family and enjoy some of life's comforts. He also spoke about the Labour Party's long-standing advocacy for rural communities, including its demand for village halls and public libraries. He believed that improving conditions for rural workers would also benefit those living in towns and cities. The provision of meals for the under-nourished schoolchildren was another key priority. Mr Anthony described the sight of poorly clothed children queueing in the cold outside schools as heartbreaking, pointing out that many of these children needed not only education but also proper sustenance.

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[311] *Cork Examiner 25/7/1925*

On the condition of schools, he said that many were inadequate—badly ventilated and, in some cases, lacking any heating. Improving school facilities remained a central part of the Labour platform. He stated that if Mr Fitzgerald and his seven Labour colleagues were elected to the Seanad, they would work to address these issues. Housing, he added, was another pressing concern. He referred specifically to Cork's own struggles, noting that while many promises had been made in the past, few had been fulfilled. Labour representatives, he said, would be expected to honour both their past and future commitments to the electorate. Nevertheless, he acknowledged the difficulty of making substantial changes while also facing an overwhelming government majority, with only a handful of Labour members in both the Dáil and the Seanad. Finally, Mr Anthony said the Labour Party supported open competitive examinations for public service roles to ensure fair access for all. He emphasised the importance of expanding primary and technical education to better equip the children of working-class families for the challenges of adult life.[312]

In September 1925, a public meeting was held in the Cornmarket district, Cork City, under the auspices of the Cork and District Workers' Council and the Irish Labour Party, in support of the Labour candidates standing in the forthcoming Seanad elections. The eight candidates were Senator J. T. O'Farrell, Senator W. Cummins, Senator T. Farren, and Messrs E. J. Fitzgerald, L. P. Byrne, D. Houston, O. Hynes, and Thomas Ryan. The meeting was considered a great success, with a large and attentive crowd in attendance. Several bands, including those of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (IT&GWU), the Workingmen's Band, and the Parnell Guards, were present. On the platform were Senator O'Farrell, candidates E. J. Fitzgerald and L. P. Byrne, Mr R. S. Anthony (President of the Cork Workers' Council), Mr J. Barry, Mr G. Nason, Mr J. Good, Senator T. Farren, and other prominent figures from the Labour movement.

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[312] *Cork Examiner 29/8/1925*

Mr R. S. Anthony, who presided, told the gathering that each of the Labour nominees had already proven themselves in the trade union movement. He urged electors to cast their votes for all eight candidates, emphasising that they had been "tried and not found wanting." Mr E. J. Fitzgerald, standing as the local Cork candidate, called on the public to do their duty by supporting proper representation for the working class—the majority of the population. He pointed out that all candidates came from working-class backgrounds. Three were sitting Senators who had already demonstrated their capabilities, while the remaining five, although new to politics, were long-standing trade unionists and experienced activists. Mr Fitzgerald remarked that much was at stake in the upcoming election, and that a strong result for Labour would be essential in advancing the interests of workers throughout the country.[313]

The following month, the '*Irish Independent*' reported that a preliminary meeting was held by a new Committee in Cork City, composed of representatives from both employers and workers. The outlook, as expressed at the meeting, had been distinctly hopeful and optimistic about achieving positive outcomes. The idea to establish such a Committee had originated from Mr. James Joseph Walsh TD, the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs. It had since been actively supported by the Cork Chamber of Commerce and the Cork and District Workers' Council. Mr. Anthony, President of the latter, had emphasised that the Council's primary aim should have been to prevent strikes and all forms of industrial unrest—factors which allegedly deterred investment and hindered the establishment of new factories in the city.

The paper opined that this had been precisely the right spirit with which to begin such an initiative, and one would have hoped to see similar efforts extended to other parts of Ireland. Several months earlier, Mr. John Good had proposed in the Dáil that a similar Committee, comprising representatives from the Government, employers, and workers, should be established in Dublin. However, no action

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[313] *Cork Examiner 15/9/1925*

had been taken, and strikes and labour disputes remained as frequent and disruptive as ever.[314]

Also in October, Mr E. Fitzgerald presided over a Cork Workers' Council meeting that was attended by a fairly large number of delegates. Mr Barry and the Chairman welcomed back Mr David Clancy (Grocers' and Allied Trades) to the Council following a serious illness. Mr Clancy suitably returned thanks. It was also agreed to record in the minutes a letter from Mrs Mary Hurley of Castle Street, expressing gratitude for the Council's vote of sympathy on the recent death of her husband.

A letter from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce was read, notifying the Council that an inquiry would be held on 31st October at the Department's offices regarding the draft Special Order entitled Trade Boards (Tailoring) Order, 1925. The letter advised that, given the Council's objections to the draft, they could be represented at the inquiry. This matter was referred to the Tailors' Society. A lengthy circular letter was then read from the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress, concerning a proposed national unemployment campaign throughout the country. The letter requested the Council's assistance with organising public meetings, passing resolutions similar to the draft enclosed, encouraging and supporting other bodies to hold meetings, compiling lists of speakers, and providing information on local unemployment levels. The draft resolution read as follows:

> *"That this meeting of the Cork Workers' Council, recognising that large numbers of citizens able and willing to work have been unemployed for extended periods, that the vast majority are now deprived of unemployment benefits and are left entirely without resources save for charity or Poor Law relief, and that there is little prospect of their obtaining work in the near future, declares that the situation constitutes a serious national emergency. We demand that the Government take immediate steps to initiate productive works to provide employment at full Trade Union rates, and to ensure full maintenance for those for whom work cannot be found.*

[314] *Irish Independent 3/10/1925*

Furthermore, the Dáil and Seanad should be summoned without delay to grant legislative authority for the necessary measures."

The Chairman expressed his belief that all present sympathised with the sentiments and suggestions in the circular, and would do their utmost to implement them. However, he noted that there was too much detail to deal with at once and suggested referring the matter to the Executive to allow them time to consider appropriate ways and means. Mr Nason observed that some parts of the circular could be addressed that evening. He proposed instructing the Secretary to write to the local TDs to gauge their willingness to address the situation. He emphasised that only by a united voice could they compel the Dáil to convene, and that securing such a meeting would be a significant step forward. He moved to endorse the resolution and agreed with the Chairman that the other suggestions in the circular be referred to the Executive for further consideration. Mr McAuliffe seconded the motion. The resolution was carried unanimously, and it was further agreed to refer the remaining portions of the letter to the Executive.[315]

In November 1925, the '*Irish News*' reported that a contract for the supply of 10,000 pairs of military leggings for the Irish Free State Army has been awarded to an English firm on the grounds that placing the order in Ireland would result in a considerable loss of revenue to the Free State Government. The "standard" pattern for the order was a legging produced by a Cork firm, Robert Day and Sons, who had previously supplied the same item in 1923 under an earlier contract. To secure the current contract, the English firm submitted a tender at a price believed to be so low that no other manufacturer, English or Irish, could reasonably compete. In announcing these details to the Cork Workers' Council, the Chairman expressed that, in the interests of all parties—workers and manufacturers alike—it was only fair that clear information be made available regarding the price

[315] *Cork Examiner 10/10/1925*

quoted by the English firm, as well as the name of the English contractor.[316]

In December 1925, at a Cork Workers' Council meeting, with the President, Mr R. S. Anthony, in the chair, a letter was read from the Town Tenants' League requesting permission for a small deputation to appear before the Council. The Chairman said the League's purpose was a worthy one, and no doubt they had saved many people from rapacious landlords. The deputation would, of course, be welcomed at the next meeting. Messrs Booth and Fox wrote to thank the Chairman for his kind remarks regarding their company. Mr Barry protested against the posting of bills outside the Labour Exchange inviting men to enquire within for details about work on the Shannon scheme. He said it was very unfair to try to induce unemployed men to go to Co. Limerick for a "blackleg" job.[317]

Approximately a week later, Mr R. S. Anthony, President, who occupied the chair at another meeting of the Cork Workers' Council, said that about eight or ten days ago an invitation had been extended to the Council and also to the Executive Council of the Industrial Development Association to visit the Free Boot factories one evening, to be followed by a visit to the new factory known as the Hanover factory. Some delegates from that Council and some members of the Co. Executive of the I.D.A. had visited both factories, and gratification was expressed that an amount of extra employment had been created and promised as a result of the opening of the new factory. They were shown around the Hanover factory by the managing director, Mr Freer, and by Mr Dwyer, and the various processes were clearly explained. It was certainly a bright spot amidst the gloom to see a large number of workers in the factory, most of them being trained in the manufacture of an article which had never before been made in Cork and, he thought, in the south of Ireland — high-class ladies' boots and shoes.

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[316] *Irish News 18/11/1925*

[317] *Cork Examiner 5/12/1925*

In addition to local workers, who were practically new to the industry, there were some skilled operatives intermixed with the trainees, and the management of the factory expressed themselves as thoroughly satisfied with the results obtained so far and with the adaptability of the labour employed. It surprised him and the others in the deputation to learn that up to now the new factory had received no local support from some Cork firms. It was a peculiar anomaly that various warehouses in Cork were inviting customers with posters to come and purchase from their establishments, but meanwhile a large factory providing considerable employment had received no encouragement from local retailers such as the drapery firms, which would enable them to provide much additional employment and incidentally circulate more money, some of which would naturally find its way into trades such as he had mentioned. He expressed his great surprise when told that the factory had received no orders from local firms, while an order was being executed for New Zealand. That was an extraordinary state of affairs. While the local shopkeepers were not supporting the only boot factory in Cork, they were all gratified to see that in such a short time such good progress had been achieved as regards the factory's equipment and the amount of employment given. There were a number of young persons in the factory who would be trained in a useful handicraft. That, he thought, was a tribute to local enterprise, seeing that most of the labour, being local, had to be trained, but he and those who visited the factory with him were convinced that, in time, the project would bear very fruitful results. The delegates agreed.[318]

In January 1926, at a meeting of the Cork Workers' Council, presided over by Mr. R. S. Anthony, a letter was read from the Mental Hospital Branch of the Trades and Labour Council. The letter referred to a press report from a sitting of the City Commissioner at the institution, which indicated that a substantial reduction—approximately 10 per cent—was to be implemented under the heading of "Salaries." The letter stated that the staff were prepared to prove before any impartial tribunal that their wages were far from excessive

[318] *Cork Examiner 12/12/1925*

when compared to similar roles in the region. They expressed confidence that the workers of Cork would fully support any actions deemed necessary to defend what was, in essence, a minimal living wage. The letter further explained that the staff were also being stripped of a long-standing entitlement, dating back to the Grand Jury era, which allowed for six months' full pay in the event of illness. This entitlement had been the subject of discussions between the Committee of Management and the National Insurance Commissioners. However, a proposal was now being made to reduce the benefit to just three months, with the justification that Civil Servants only received the same.

The writers of the letter argued that Civil Service conditions were vastly different from those in a mental health institution, highlighting the hazardous and unpleasant nature of their work. The Chairman acknowledged that the proposed cut warranted serious attention. He expressed hope that once the City Commissioner had been made aware of the full circumstances, the decision would either be reversed or significantly modified. He noted the physically and emotionally demanding work carried out by the attendants, adding that any industrial action—such as a strike or lockout —could have severe consequences given the vulnerable nature of the patients who required consistent and skilled care. He recalled how not long ago, mental hospital attendants earned extremely low wages, and only recently had they begun to receive anything resembling a living wage. He appealed to the Commissioner to act with compassion and caution, suggesting that negotiations might still be possible. A representative of the Mental Hospital attendants, who was present at the meeting, said the news of the proposed cuts had come as a shock, having been announced without warning. At a recent general meeting, the attendants had resolved to invite the President of the Workers' Council to attend a follow-up meeting to help determine the best course of action to resist the reduction. The Chairman confirmed that the existing policy allowed attendants six months of full sick pay, followed by six months at half pay. The Commissioner now sought to cut that to just three months at full pay and three at half. Mr. George Nason described the proposal as one of the first attacks of the new

year. He criticised the Commissioner for ignoring the increasing cost of living, referencing a previous general strike in Cork that had been called off on the promise of lower food prices—a promise that had not been kept. He warned that lowering wages could lead to a decline in work performance, ultimately harming patients. However, he added that if the Commissioner could justify the cuts with valid reasons, he believed the workers would be willing to consider them. Mr. Jeremiah Kelleher, H.C., seconded the motion for the Chairman to attend the attendants' upcoming meeting. He criticised the Commissioner, whom he believed had once claimed to be a Trade Unionist and even to have gone on strike in defence of workers' rights. With such a background, Kelleher argued, the Commissioner's first step should have been to open discussions with the organised representatives of the staff.[319]

At a February meeting, accepting his re-appointment for a third term, the Chairman (Richard Anthony) expressed deep gratitude for the trust placed in him. He reflected on the severe unemployment that had plagued Cork over the past year, and explained that the Council had made persistent efforts to rally support from those with financial means—particularly investors—to mitigate the crisis. Appeals had been issued both by the Council and its affiliated bodies. While acknowledging that some among Cork's employers were conscientious citizens, he lamented that most with capital or bank savings had failed to respond positively to the Council's proposals.

This reluctance, he argued, highlighted a broader absence of public spirit in Cork. Recently, officials—one of whom held a senior post on the County Borough Insurance Committee—had presented data illustrating alarming mortality rates from tuberculosis and other similar diseases, largely caused by overcrowding and poor sanitation. He stressed that these were conditions that could—and should—be corrected. Much of the sickness experienced in the city over the previous year was directly linked to inadequate housing.

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[319] *Evening Echo 15/1/1926*

A year prior, the Council had agreed that the compensation received for the destruction of City Hall should be earmarked for constructing housing for working-class families. Yet not a single dwelling had been built. He feared that even another year later, nothing would have changed. It was no wonder, he said, that hundreds of highly skilled tradesmen had been forced to emigrate in search of employment. Some of Cork's most talented workers had been driven abroad due to the lack of local opportunity. He criticised those economic theorists who blamed trade unions for the country's troubles. A paper recently published by a well-known public figure claimed that the city's economic difficulties were largely due to limitations on output caused by workers. This, he argued, was a one-sided view that ignored the ways in which capitalists themselves hindered production—through practices like creating artificial shortages in food and essential goods. The implication was that poverty stemmed from workers' failure to produce, yet when these same workers went to Great Britain or America, they were well-paid and highly respected. In fact, many returning workers reported that they actually worked harder at home, compared to when they did abroad.

Turning to broader issues, the Chairman called for serious consideration of the country's future economic and fiscal policies. Although he declined to state a preference between Protectionism and Free Trade, he urged that any policy adopted should be carefully examined in all its dimensions. Using the printing industry as an example, he noted that no worker in that field in the Free State should have been unemployed if a Protectionist policy had been implemented. In just six months, over £174,000 worth of printed materials and stationery had been imported into the country—an indication of the scale of outsourcing in the industry. He suggested that most other trades likely had similar stories. He cautioned delegates not to embrace any economic policy without a full and critical analysis. Although Protectionism might appear attractive, he advised the working class—who would ultimately bear the consequences regardless of which party held power—to proceed with care. He proposed that the Government establish a formal inquiry or commission to

develop a coherent and transparent economic and fiscal strategy for the Free State.

Aside from these issues, he reported that the period had been largely uneventful, though marked by deep suffering among the working classes. He expressed hope that the coming year would bring significant improvement, both economically and socially, for the city and the nation. He concluded with the hope that the Council's continued efforts would be met with stronger support in the year ahead. This was met with an applause. Messrs. Hurley, Hobart, and Duncan also expressed thanks for their appointments.[320]

In March 1926, at a meeting of the Cork Workers' Council, several issues of local significance were discussed. Chief among them were the proposal for an exhibition in Cork city, the rebuilding of the City Hall, and the ongoing need for housing for the working classes. There appeared to be near-unanimous agreement on the exhibition proposal. Whether national or international in scope, such an event was widely seen as a potential driver of trade and tourism. As a result, it was considered highly desirable to begin planning for its realisation. The matters of the City Hall and public housing, however, were more complex—particularly because they had become closely linked. This connection arose from a proposal to use the compensation awarded for the destruction of the old City Hall to fund the construction of housing for workers. Within the Council, opinions were somewhat divided on the matter. No one disputed the urgent need for more housing, but some members argued that the City Hall was itself a significant and necessary civic project. Diverting funds from its rebuilding, they contended, could involve legal complications. Furthermore, it was pointed out that had construction on the City Hall commenced a year earlier, local unemployment would likely have been less severe.

Even accepting these points, the Council reaffirmed its belief —one it had voiced repeatedly—that when weighing the need for a new City Hall against the urgent necessity for adequate housing, the latter must take precedence. The

[320] *Evening Echo 12/2/1926*

question was simply this: which need was more pressing? For anyone familiar with Cork's housing crisis, the answer was clear. Those in doubt were invited to consider the most recent annual meeting of the National Women's Health Association, where evidence had been presented showing that the appalling housing conditions endured by many in the city were directly contributing to the spread of tuberculosis and other diseases. Under such circumstances, was it more vital to construct a new City Hall than to eliminate the conditions that endangered the health—and lives—of so many citizens?

The Council questioned whether legal technicalities should take precedence over basic human needs. While they acknowledged the value of having a functioning City Hall, they could not agree that it was more urgent than addressing the dire housing shortage. Ideally, both projects would be funded—but in the absence of such a solution, the Council maintained that providing decent homes for those in need was the clearly superior priority. Moreover, they expressed doubt that the public would mourn the decision if the City Hall compensation were instead used to advance the common good, through the construction of adequate workers' housing.[321]

At an April 1926 meeting of the Cork Workers' Council, presided over by Chairman Mr R. S. Anthony, several items were discussed. Consideration of a circular from the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Executive—which proposed that some form of demonstration be organised in observance of Labour Day—was postponed to the following meeting for further discussion.

The Chairman then referred to the Irish National Teachers' Congress, which was currently taking place in Cork. He described the event as a resounding success thus far and expressed the hope that it would result in tangible improvements for both teachers and pupils. He added that such progress would, in turn, have a positive effect on the broader nation. Mr Anthony also reminded delegates and the public of a concert scheduled to take place at the Palace

[321] *Evening Echo 20/3/1926*

Theatre in support of the Day Testimonial Fund. He made a strong appeal for support from both the Cork Workers' Council representatives and the citizens of the City of Cork, describing it as a deserving cause worthy of broad public backing.[322]

Later that month, a specially convened meeting of the Cork Workers' Council was held at the Trades' Hall to consider the recent decision by the Cork Harbour Commissioners to reduce staff wages. Mr R. S. Anthony, President, presided over the proceedings, which drew a large attendance. At the outset, the Chairman announced that a deputation from the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union wished to participate in the meeting. Following a motion that was duly proposed and seconded, the delegation was admitted. The Chairman reminded those present that the issue of placing Harbour Board workers on three-quarter time had previously been raised, prompting the decision to call this special meeting. Additional delegates had been invited in an effort to ensure that all industrial sectors represented on the Cork Harbour Board would have a voice. The primary concern was the Commissioners' proposal to reduce both skilled and unskilled workers to a three-quarter time schedule. Many viewed this as a covert means of reducing wages. It had been suggested that, should the Harbour Commissioners succeed, other employers might soon follow suit. He emphasised the need to discuss the issue rationally and avoid personal attacks, with the hope that the deliberations might help guide the organisations involved toward a considered response.

Mr E. Fitzgerald (Joiners' Union) delivered a detailed address, stating that the workers were effectively being presented with an ultimatum: accept shorter working hours or face the dismissal of a number of casual staff. He identified four key questions for examination:

- Was the reported £10,000 deficit a factual and accurate figure?
- If the Commissioners had anticipated financial difficulties, had they done enough to curb unnecessary spending?

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[322] *Cork Examiner 10/4/1926*

- Were the sacrifices being imposed shared equally across all staff?
- What would be the wider impact on other workers if this policy was implemented?

Mr Fitzgerald also questioned the urgency of the move and whether any external pressures had influenced the Commissioners' actions. He challenged the £10,000 figure, arguing that the actual shortfall was closer to £4,000. He criticised certain Harbour Board appointments and highlighted inconsistencies in how salary cuts were being applied—pointing out that while clerical staff faced a 10% cut, manual workers stood to lose 22.5%. When combined with a 12.5% reduction already imposed in 1923, workers were facing a total cut of at least 35%. He warned that if workers accepted the short time, it might later be used to justify permanent wage reductions. Mr Fitzgerald concluded by urging total resistance, calling the proposal a deliberate attack on working conditions, and a precedent for broader wage cuts in the city.

Mr E. Lynch (I.T. & G.W.U.) fully supported Mr Fitzgerald's stance, and proposed opening discussions with the Harbour Commissioners. He recommended that a delegation present the issues raised—particularly those highlighted by Mr Fitzgerald—and explore whether a return to previous conditions could be secured or, at the very least, the severity of the proposed measures reduced. Mr Murphy (Shipwrights) noted that two-thirds of Harbour Board staff were temporary and one-third permanent. He observed that failure to accept the terms would likely result in job losses among the temporary staff. If no alternative emerged, he suggested accepting the short time as the lesser of two evils.

Mr McAuliffe (Engineers) stressed the importance of unity and echoed calls for a conference with the Commissioners. He expressed disapproval that such significant changes had been introduced without prior consultation with affected workers. Mr Carter (Seamen and Firemen) voiced his full support for the positions already expressed. Mr Barry, a member of the Harbour Commission, stated that he had opposed the measures at the previous meeting and had

requested that the relevant unions be consulted. He was told, however, that the matter was an internal staffing issue and did not concern the unions.[323]

In late June 1926, a large crowd gathered on the Grand Parade in Cork city to hear a performance by the Miners' Choir at the National Monument. The choir, comprising 14 members, sang from a waggonette that had been arranged for the occasion. They were introduced by Mr R. S. Anthony, Chairman of the Cork Workers' Council, as a deputation from the South Wales miners. He explained that they had come to Ireland seeking financial support for their ongoing industrial struggle in Britain (Anthony seems to be referring to the 1926 General Strike, conducted in sympathy with the still striking miners, which had occurred a month previously). Mr Anthony welcomed the delegation and urged the crowd to contribute whatever they could to the cause. He referenced a remark made by a member of the British aristocracy, reported in that day's press, which claimed the only way to defeat the miners was to starve them—a statement he condemned.[324] [325]

One of the delegates addressed the gathering, explaining that they were raising funds to keep a canteen operational in South Wales. This canteen was providing food to more than 800 miners, women, and children. He outlined the broader context of the dispute, criticising the stance of the coal owners and warning that the attack on miners was likely to be the first of many similar efforts targeting other sectors of labour. The choir opened with the Welsh National Anthem and went on to perform several choral pieces, which were warmly received by the audience. During the performance, a number of donation collectors moved through the crowd with collection boxes, and there was a strong response—practically everyone present, it was reported, had made a

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[323] *Cork Examiner 21/4/1926*

[324] *Cork Examiner 26/6/1926*

[325] *Encyclopaedia Britannica - 'General Strike of 1926'*

contribution.[326] At the beginning of July, at a meeting of the Cork Workers' Council, presided over by Mr R. S. Anthony, it was announced that the Miners' Choir had returned to the city, following a short absence. Plans were in place for the choir to hold an indoor concert in the coming days, along with additional open-air performances. The Chairman expressed hope that these events would be well supported. A vote of thanks was also passed to the Workingmen's Fife and Drum Band for their participation in the initial concert.[327]

That August, at a meeting of the Cork Workers' Council, presided over by the Chairman, Mr R. S. Anthony, Mr E. Fitzgerald reported the passing of Mr Timothy Harrington, a long-standing and respected member of the Amalgamated Woodworkers' Society. Mr Harrington had also served as a delegate to the Workers' Council. He was described as a straightforward, honourable, and committed comrade, as well as a staunch trade unionist. Mr Fitzgerald proposed that a vote of sympathy be passed to Mr Harrington's family. The motion was seconded by Mr Hobart and supported by Mr J. Barry, H.C. Mr Barry remarked that the late Mr Harrington was regarded as the "father of the carpenters of Cork," and that his loss would be deeply mourned by the Society. Declaring the resolution passed, the Chairman said that, if anything, the tributes paid fell short of the mark. Mr Harrington, he said, had embodied the ideals of trade unionism and carried with him to the grave the deep respect and regret of his fellow workers.

The Chairman went on to note that, since their last meeting, the city had lost a notable citizen with the death of Sir Henry O'Shea. While they had just paid tribute to a champion of trade unionism, he said, it was also fitting to acknowledge the virtues of employers who treated their workers with fairness and humanity. Sir Henry O'Shea, he continued, had been such an employer—rising from humble beginnings and never losing sight of those origins even after attaining wealth and prominence. It was only right, he concluded, that the Council

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[326] *Cork Examiner 26/6/1926*

[327] *Cork Examiner 3/7/1926*

should extend its condolences to Sir Henry's widow and relatives, recognising him as an exemplary employer and an outstanding figure in Cork's civic life. Mr Good, proposing the resolution of sympathy, noted that those who had worked for Sir Henry had only the highest praise for him. He was always respected and revered, and the workers, alongside those of his own class, extended their heartfelt sympathies to his family.

Mr Nason, seconding the motion, said that although Sir Henry had risen from modest origins, no one else in Cork city had brought their business to such a level of excellence. As Lord Mayor, he had been loved and respected across all social classes, and had never caused offence—even to the humblest citizen. Votes of sympathy were also passed to the families of the late Mr Fahy and Mr Walsh, both of the furnishing trades. A deputation from the Penygraig Choir of the Rhondda Valley was then received. They were promised the full support of the Council in their efforts to raise funds in aid of the striking Welsh miners.[328]

In September 1926, at a meeting of the Cork Workers' Council, Mr George Nason presided in the absence of the President. The Chairman said he wished to raise a matter of grave importance concerning the Mental Hospital. Recently, contracts were issued for the supply of caps to both charge attendants and ordinary attendants. In the case of the charge attendants—a smaller contract—the work was awarded to a local firm and was completed satisfactorily. However, for the sake of a difference of only six or seven pence, the larger contract for ordinary attendants' caps was also awarded to a local firm which, in turn, had the caps made in England. The caps were even stamped "Made in England." The Chairman expressed his concern that if the Commissioner was aiming to economise, it would have made more sense to purchase the caps directly from England. He added that he was unsure whether the Commissioner was aware of what had occurred, but given the prevailing levels of unemployment, the issue should be investigated without delay. Continuing, the Chairman referred to a further complaint from the Mental

[328] *Cork Examiner 14/8/1926*

Hospital workers. Under a very old agreement, they had worked 56 hours per week, but were now expected to do an additional three hours of fire duty. Their normal duties were already very arduous, and this added strain was very unreasonable, he said in addition.[329]

On 15 September 1926, the '*Irish Independent*' reported that City, Commissioner, Mr. Monahan, overseeing the affairs of Cork Mental Hospital, responded to a deputation from the Cork Workers' Council concerning staff grievances. He stated that he could not consider appointing a special person to avoid the imposition of three hours' extra duty two nights a week on attendants to act as firemen. According to him, this was not extra work, as the men were only required to remain within call. He also expressed disagreement with the deputation regarding another grievance, this time about the requirement to pass relevant examinations before promotion. He pointed out that attendants had opportunities to attend lectures and obtain the necessary certificates.[330]

Later that month, at a meeting of the Cork Workers' Council, the Chairman, Mr. R. S. Anthony, presided. The Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary were appointed to represent the Council on the committee of the Child Welfare League. A letter was received from the Cork Executive of Cumann na nGaedheal, inviting the Council to attend the reception for President Cosgrave and the Minister for Justice on their arrival in Cork. On the motion of Mr. J. Barry, H.C., seconded by Mr. C. Hobart, it was decided that no action would be taken on the matter. The Chairman drew attention to a strike that had been ongoing in a furnishing firm in Cork. It had been in operation for eight or nine weeks before it was officially brought to the notice of the Council. He (the Chairman) and the Secretary had been deputed to interview the proprietor, but found him unwilling to adopt a reasonable attitude. The strike had arisen over the employment of excessive boy labour. In the view of the Chairman and members of the furnishing trade, the number of boys

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[329] *Evening Echo 10/9/1926*

[330] *Irish Independent 15/9/1926*

employed by the firm was disproportionately high in relation to the number of men. The proprietor was reminded that a substantial tariff had been placed on imported furniture, and that it was therefore incumbent upon him to ensure that the goods he manufactured were produced under fair labour conditions.

However, the proprietor appeared to harbour a grievance which, as far as the Chairman could see, was purely imaginary. Steps would need to be taken to show him—and others like him who employed excessive boy labour—their proper position. If the imposition of tariffs simply meant that employers and manufacturers would benefit at the expense of workers and through the exploitation of boy labour, then the fewer tariffs that were imposed, the better. The Chairman added that he did not believe many supporters of the tariff movement would agree with the employer's actions.[331]

In October 1926, at a meeting of the Cork Workers' Council, Mr. R. S. Anthony presided. The Chairman stated that there was an abnormal amount of poverty and want in the city, which had been made worse by the shortage of coal and the scarcity of fuel of any kind. The condition of the very poor —those with no means of cooking their already meagre food supplies—could be better imagined than described. It was a time, he said, for extra effort on the part of those who could afford to help alleviate the distress in the city. He observed that the strain on the funds of the St. Vincent de Paul Society was being severely felt. Many citizens, he believed—himself included—felt confident that a good response would follow a house-to-house collection throughout the city's parishes. He therefore proposed the following motion:

> *"That the Lord Mayor be asked to immediately call a meeting of the representatives of the St. Vincent de Paul Society from the various parishes in the city, with the object of organising a house-to-house collection to assist the Society in meeting the unprecedented demands for assistance caused by widespread distress."*

[331] *Cork Examiner 25/9/1926*

That very day, he added, he had spoken with a former Lord Mayor of the city, who assured him that he and others would willingly assist with such a collection. The object was surely a worthy one, and he (the Chairman) felt sure there would be a hearty response from the citizens. This was met with applause.

The motion having been seconded, Mr. Good commented that the St. Vincent de Paul Society seemed to forget that a large sum of money existed in the banks of Cork for the relief of the poor. He felt that, so far as the Chairman's suggestion was concerned, the general public was already overburdened. It was appalling, he said, to walk through the city and see the condition of the poor—people were starving and perishing. If there were any truly responsible public body in the city, such a state of affairs would not be tolerated. Rather than conducting a house-to-house collection, the money already held in the banks should be released. The Chairman responded that the money Mr. Good referred to was the legacy of the late Mr. Geary, and he understood that approximately £500 of it had already been distributed among the poor. Nonetheless, it was always the poor who helped the poor, and he (the Chairman) believed a house-to-house collection would be more effective than any other measure in relieving the prevailing misery and want.

Mr. Barry suggested that a public meeting be held. While coal had been promised, if—as seemed likely—it were to be sold at over 6 shillings per bag, it would be no blessing to the poor. In the city's outlying districts, there was an abundance of waste timber. He believed that the Commissioner or another authority should establish a fund to procure wagon-loads of turf and sell it at a reasonable price. In some cases, the poor had been forced to pull down parts of their homes to obtain firewood. The price of coal was beyond the means of the average workingman. The Chairman agreed with Mr. Barry's addendum that the Lord Mayor should also be asked to convene a public meeting with the aim of establishing a poor relief fund. It was unanimously decided to take the necessary steps at once.[332]

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[332] *Evening Echo 22/10/1926*

That November, at a meeting of the Cork and District Workers' Council, Mr. R. S. Anthony, President, occupied the chair. Arising from the minutes regarding the question of the promotion of Mental Hospital attendants, Mr. O'Donoghue explained that there had been no intention of denying Mr. Monahan's authority or of attempting to dictate to him. The only wish, he claimed, in the interest of justice and fair play, was to point out what they believed to be the most appropriate method of making such appointments. The Chairman said he understood their position. They merely wanted to draw attention to certain considerations which, in their view, ought to influence the Commissioner and the R.M.S. in the selection of the candidate or candidates. He understood that some of the candidates possessed stronger credentials than the individual who ultimately received the appointment. However, he believed it was a temporary position and that the matter was unlikely to arise again.

The Chairman went on to say that, on the preceding Wednesday, a small booklet had come into his possession containing the bye-laws of the Cork Rotary Club. Strikingly, the imprint on the bye-laws was that of a Belfast firm. It seemed that the Rotarians could not "rotate" within Cork for their business—they had to gravitate towards Belfast. This was, he remarked, a club whose members, including some of its leading figures, made a great show of supporting home industry, the Irish language, and all things Irish. Yet they could not even leave a trivial matter such as the printing of their own bye-laws to be handled locally. These were not general rules applying to all Rotary Clubs, but specifically the bye-laws of the Cork branch. If that was the kind of "rotation" the Rotarians supported, then the sooner they rotated themselves up to Belfast, the better for all concerned. Mr. J. Good, H.C., complained that some firms in Cork, on the pretext that they could not complete work on time, sent it not only to Belfast but even over to England. Industries had recently declined in Cork—such as the tobacco and paper industries—and little had been said at the time, because it had suited those involved to remain silent. The printing trade was in the same situation, and the sooner such practices were exposed, the better. The Chairman agreed, adding that while

there were firms in Cork which might fairly be described as agents touting for English business, that could not be said in this particular instance. The job could have been done just as cheaply—if not more cheaply—locally. One would expect that the Rotary Club, containing so many self-proclaimed patriots, would have taken the trouble to ensure the work was printed in Cork.[333]

At a December 1926 meeting of the Cork Workers' Council, Mr. R. S. Anthony, the President, said that in the "days of the old Corporation," it was customary around Christmas-time to endeavour, by means of providing employment, to help tide many of their less fortunate citizens over the festive period. The intention was to bring, as far as possible, a little of the joys and comforts of Christmas into the lives of their fellow citizens.

He (the President) was aware that times had changed and that strict economy was now being exercised. Nevertheless, he did not believe that—even under current circumstances—the most rigid of economists would object to the suggestion he was now putting forward. Namely, that in view of the dire poverty and distress—perhaps unprecedented in the history of the city—the City Engineer and the City Commissioner should co-operate in an effort to provide employment for at least some of the vast army of unemployed for a week or two prior to Christmas. There was, he said, a great deal of necessary work to be done—work of a utilitarian and productive nature—which might reasonably be undertaken before Christmas. He was confident that if the Council made representations to the Commissioner in this regard, he would do his best to comply. The President acknowledged that such work, if granted, would be of an emergency nature and would not resolve the broader issue of unemployment. Nevertheless, the Christmas season should be made the occasion, as in former years, to express some of that peace and goodwill traditionally associated with the great Christian festival. He moved:

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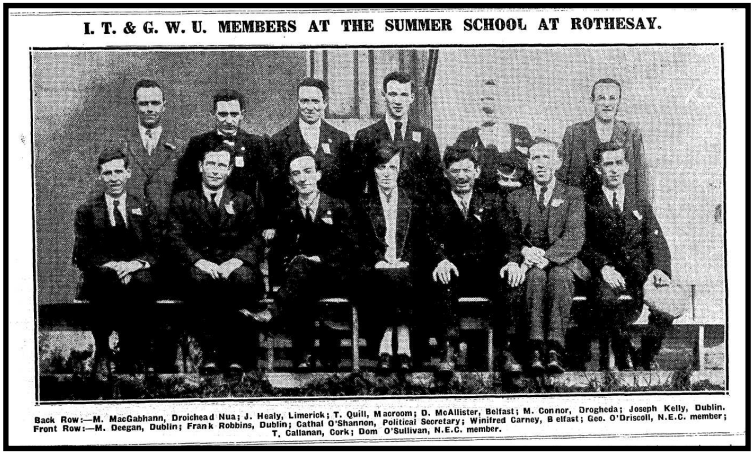
[333] *Cork Examiner 13/11/1926*

"That the Secretary be instructed to write to Commissioner Monahan requesting him to provide as much work as he possibly can within the next couple of weeks, so that as many as possible of those who have neither State employment benefit nor any other resources may be given employment during the Christmas period."

Mr. G. Nason remarked that two officials were, at that time, engaged in a dispute over who owned the mud on the quays and streets of Cork City—and it now appeared that no one did. He complained that the streets and lanes of the city were in a scandalous condition and required immediate attention. No one was being employed to address the situation, and it was high time something was done to remedy it. The accumulation of filth and mud in the streets was, in his opinion, a major contributor to the widespread illness that was prevalent in every part of the city. Mr. J. Good, H.C., said it was a waste of time drawing these matters to the attention of the authorities. Mr. Monahan held his position due to the backing of a particular class in the community—people who constantly wrote letters praising the very work that Mr. Monahan was now being paid to do. It was little wonder, he claimed, that disease and sickness were rampant when the lanes and streets were allowed to remain in such a filthy state. They were, in his view, an absolute disgrace. The President's motion was agreed to unanimously.[334]

[334] *Cork Examiner 11/12/1926*

Robert Day, a city councillor (T.C.) and later Labour T.D. who would lead the infamous takeover of Cork Harbour in September 1921.


I. T. & G. W. U. MEMBERS AT THE SUMMER SCHOOL AT ROTHESAY.
Back Row:—M. MacGabhann, Droichead Nua; J. Healy, Limerick; T. Quill, Mallow; D. McAllister, Belfast; M. Connor, Drogheda; Joseph Kelly, Dublin.
Front Row:—M. Deegan, Dublin; Frank Robbins, Dublin; Cathal O'Shannon, Political Secretary; Winifred Carney, Belfast; Geo. O'Driscoll, N.E.C. member; T. Callanan, Cork; Dom O'Sullivan, N.E.C. member.

IT&GWU voluntary organisers at the Council of Labour Summer School in Great Britain. Featuring Messrs. T. Callanan and T. Quill, both from County Cork ('*The Voice of Labour*,' 13 June 1925). Also pictured in the delegation are the renowned IT&GWU and 1916 Rising heroes Winifred Carney and Frank Robbins.

The Customs House at Cork Harbour, which was hijacked by dockers in September 1921. A red flag was hoisted over the building as a symbol of "workers' control."

The only known photo of the take-over of the Customs House, which ran for one week during September 1921.

THE BOUNDARY.

VOICE OF LABOUR

Official Organ of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union.

NEW SERIES. Vol. VI. No. 32. DUBLIN, SATURDAY, AUGUST 9, 1924. ONE PENNY

CONGRESS OF THE IRISH LABOUR PARTY IN CORK'S OWN TOWN.

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

Cork, Monday.

Fine weather is favouring Congress in Cork. We are meeting in the Technical Schools. The arrangements made by the Cork Reception Committee are excellent, and the delegates from all parts of Ireland are already loud in their praise of the Cork men.

Two Hundred and Two Delegates.

Two hundred and two delegates are present representing 302,000 affiliated workers. These were accorded a civic reception. A large number of people assembled outside the Institute to witness the arrival of the delegates. During this period the Brass and Reed Band of the Dublin No. 1 Branch of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union contributed an enjoyable musical programme.

The President (L. J. Duffy) occupied the chair, and was supported by the Lord Mayor of Cork (Councillor Sean French, the City High Sheriff (Councillor Sir J. H. Scott), and Mr. Wm. Ellis, T.C., representing the Cork Corporation; T. J. Johnson, T.D., Secretary to the Congress; T. O'Connell, T.D.; Senator J. T. O'Farrell, Senator Thomas Farren, R. S. Anthony, Cork Workers' Council; Ald. Wm. O'Brien, James Casey, Denis Cullen, and other members of the Executive Council.

The President said before they commenced the proceedings proper it was the desire of the Lord Mayor and representatives of the Cork Corporation to extend to the delegates a civic welcome.

The Lord Mayor, who was most cordially received, said it was with pleasure he accepted the invitation of the Cork Workers' Council to be present at that Congress, and he was also very pleased that it was his privilege in his official capacity to extend to the delegates a cead mile failte to Cork. He had always found that both Labour and the Labour representatives were as alive to the industrial, economic and general prosperity of their city as any other section of the community (applause). At the moment Cork wanted a tremendous amount of co-operation (hear, hear). Labour in the past had readily given that co-operation, and he asked them to do the same at that Congress. He might claim to have some little connection with the Labour movement in Cork, and at a time when it was not the tremendous power that it was that day, and he had always been pleased with the growth of Labour, and any assistance that he could give towards that end he would always be at their service (applause). The welcome he gave them from the citizens was from the bottom of their hearts, and from no one particular section, but from all the citizens (applause). He should say a special word to those delegates from the North of Ireland. He could assure them that they were bound to them by heart and hand, and that no power on earth could cast those links asunder (applause).

Mr. R. S. Anthony, President of the Cork Workers' Council, as Chairman of the local Reception Committee, also extended a hearty welcome to the delegates, and mentioned that it was the fifth occasion on which the Irish Labour Party and Trades Union Congress had assembled in Cork. Their meeting in that building, with its limitations, was actuated by the highest possible desire on their part of seeing that Labour should be accommodated somewhere that would not sully its banner. The majority of the delegates were aware that during the Black and Tan regime their City

THE TRUE SPIRIT OF THE TAILTEANN GAMES.

King Loghaidh :—"There were no such slums and such human misery in Eire when I reigned in Tara—these must be destroyed as the rule of the Gall was destroyed, else these games are but a mockery of the Aonac which I founded in the days long before the Conquest of Gaelic Law and Gaelic Liberty."

Hall was "accidentally" burned (laughter). They had, however, secured the present fine premises for the holding of the Congress (applause).

The President returned thanks for the cordial welcomes extended to the delegates. The bulk of the delegates had many pleasant experiences of Cork in the past, and they realised to the fullest extent that everything that was said by the Lord Mayor and Mr. Anthony was meant in its entirety (applause).

When L. J. Duffy had delivered his address, a vote of thanks was moved by McConnell (Belfast) and seconded by Hulsey (Cork).

The Annual Report of the National Executive.

The annual report of the National Executive (which has already been published) was next submitted to Congress and its consideration proceeded with.

Kenny, Clerical Workers, asked if he would be in order in raising the question of the attendance of Labour representatives at the sittings of the Dail, and the large number of absentees from various debates.

The Chairman said that information had been supplied to members during the morning.

Kenny said there were certain members who, according to the figures, were absent from a large number of sittings, and they should be called upon to explain.

The Chairman said the question should be raised at a later stage.

On the question of Unemployment Insurance, complaints were made by delegates regarding alleged difficulties experienced by individual members in receiving payment of unemployment benefit at local Exchanges.

T. Gorman, Limerick, referred to the "demoralising dole," and said it would be far better if they could get the Government to devote the capital used for that purpose to the undertaking of public works, which would relieve the prevailing unemployment.

Thos. Johnson, T.D., said a large number of complaints had been received regarding the treatment of individuals at local Exchanges. It was their practice to refer the individuals concerned to their respective Unions, and in nine cases out of ten the Unions took the matter up. They found that attention was paid to any complaints, and the officials usually pointed out their own limitations. Regarding the reference to the "dole," Johnson said it was popular to talk about "the demoralising dole," and they were all apt to fall into that phraseology. He thought they were making a great mistake in talking about the money as a "dole" at all. It was an insurance (hear, hear), and when they contributed to it either by taxation or weekly payment it was a thing they were justly entitled to, and they had no right to speak of it as a charitable dole. But there was another aspect. A suggestion was

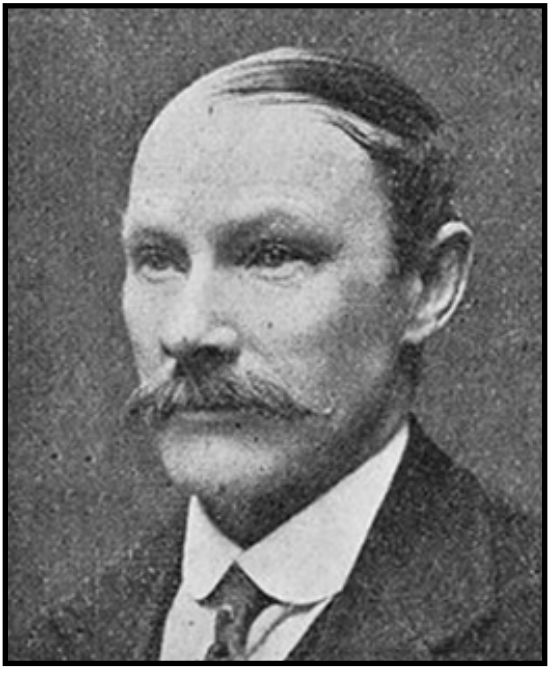
(*Continued on page 8*).

Are You Alive to the Fact ?

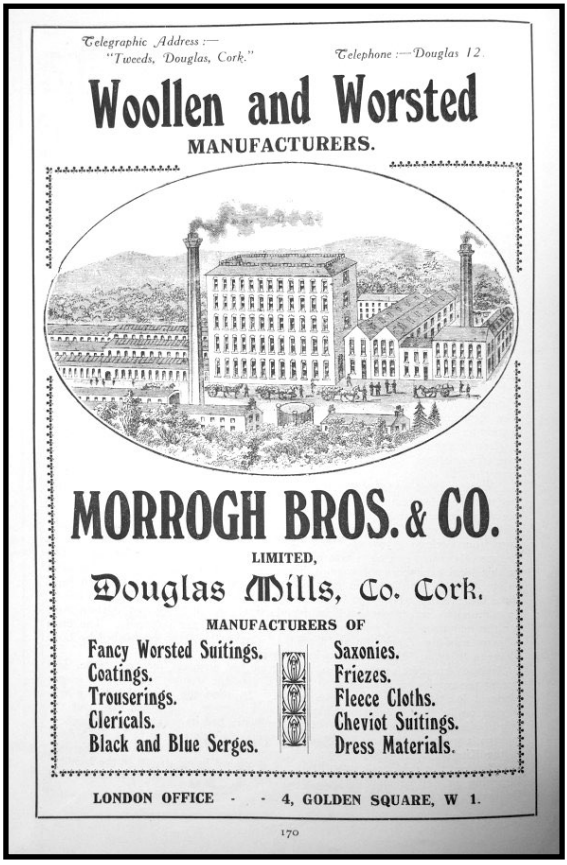
WHEN YOU BUY IRISH-MANUFACTURED GOODS YOU HELP TO KEEP OTHERS AT HOME EMPLOYED.

THEREFORE WHEN BUYING JAMS, MARMALADE & CHOCOLATES MAKE SURE THEY ARE WILLIAMS & WOODS, WHICH ARE MANUFACTURED IN DUBLIN.

An issue of '*The Voice of Labour*,' discussing a Cork City-based conference in 1924.



Michael Egan, for many years a city councillor (T.C.), TD, and chairman of the Cork Workers' Council.



During the 1920s, the IT&GWU had emphasised the organisation of mill workers, such as those in Douglas (to the south of the City).

RISING VOICES
CONCLUSION

The early history of the County Cork labour movement, as detailed in '*Rising Voices: Organising Cork's Workers, 1820–1926*,' presents not solely a chronicle of events, but a layered portrait of transformation. It reflects the changing conscience of a working class not only awakening to its shared plight, but persistently carving out a place within the political, economic, and cultural framework of both a colonial and postcolonial Ireland. From the riots and coercive campaigns of the 1820s, through to the sophisticated civic strategies of the interwar period, the story of efforts to organise labour in Cork city and county is one of adaptive resilience, of communities striving to define justice on their own terms.

What emerges from this period is a movement that was not static or monolithic, but one that continually reshaped itself in response to the shifting political climate, technological change, social expectations, and the persistent economic marginalisation of Irish workers. If anything unifies the County Cork labour tradition across this volatile century, it is not uniformity of leadership or ideological coherence, but an unrelenting commitment to defending the dignity of labour against the encroachments of power, whether that power was economic, political, religious, or imperial.

Throughout much of the nineteenth century, Co. Cork's labour associations often reflected a curious but pragmatic mix of radicalism and conservatism. Some early efforts were rooted in exclusivity, as seen in craft-based unions that sought to protect the interests of skilled artisans, usually at the expense of general labourers and women. Many such groups at times resorted to the work of coercion, violence, or economic sabotage. Yet by the 1870s and 1880s, the strategies of the movement had significantly evolved, favouring more structured forms of negotiation, public engagement, and the work of political alliance-building. This transformation in tactics was not incidental. It corresponded to a growing recognition that the power of labour lay not in

insularity, but in a broad-based solidarity and civic participation.

At the heart of this shift was a developing organisational sophistication. Cork's trade councils, the emergence of the Mechanics' Hall, and numerous campaigns for municipal reform all underscored a movement no longer content with protest alone. Labour activists sought to inhabit the public sphere fully—through education, journalism, electoral politics, and cultural production. The '*Voice of Labour*,' accompanied by other papers such as '*The Workers Republic*' and the '*Irish Worker*,' in addition to similar publications, were more than newsletters; they were instruments of social thought, drawing from a wellspring of working-class literacy and creativity that reflected a community in full intellectual bloom.

Yet, the labour movement's political affiliations were never straightforward. Champions of the cause varied widely over time, crossing class, ideological, and even national boundaries. In the early nineteenth century, the movement found partial allies in the Liberal Party, which had drawn upon the rhetoric of reform and equality in advocating for Catholic emancipation and franchise expansion. This alignment, however, was always uneasy. Middle-class liberalism in Cork, while occasionally sympathetic to labour's plight, frequently pulled back from meaningful support, especially when working-class demands clashed with commercial interests.

In the early twentieth century, a more unexpected figure emerged as a public advocate of labour rights: Winston Churchill. As a Liberal Cabinet Minister, Churchill championed a series of welfare and industrial reforms that resonated with Irish workers, including Co. Cork's. Though his later legacy, especially in Ireland, would be irreversibly marked by his militaristic response to Irish independence, this earlier period saw Churchill supporting minimum wage laws, the expansion of trade boards, and social insurance policies that Irish labour leaders largely welcomed. That such a figure could briefly align with the objectives of the Cork Trades Council illustrates both the fluidity and the tactical pluralism

of the movement. Labour did not swear fealty to any single political party or doctrine; its loyalties lay first with the working class itself, and with those who would advance its cause.

Perhaps most radical was the alignment, albeit often unofficial and fragmented, between the Cork labour movement and elements of militant republicanism during and after the Irish Civil War. While the broader leadership of the independence movement had at times varied in its attitudes towards socialism and labour issues, a significant number of Anti-Treatyites understood the Irish revolution as a social revolution, not merely an ethnic/cultural one. This vision is powerfully captured in Ken Loach's County Cork-based, '*The Wind that Shakes the Barley*,' starring Oscar-winning Irish actor Cillian Murphy. The film (winning the prestigious 2006 Cannes Film Festival), though dramatised, is grounded in the political realities of the time, and presents the Anti-Treaty IRA as not only rejecting the Anglo-Irish Treaty for its perpetuation of British Crown influence, but also for its failure to deliver economic justice and social transformation. In this interpretation, organised labour's goals, such as land redistribution, economic democracy, social justice, as well as community-led governance, were not adjuncts to national liberation but also essential to its fulfilment.

This reading also aligns with numerous historical records demonstrating that the Cork Workers' Council and associated unions continued to lobby for housing reform, expanded public works, and educational initiatives even in the turbulent 1920s. Far from being sidelined during the revolutionary decade, labour found itself thrust into the centre of debates about what kind of Ireland should emerge from the ruins of empire. The post-independence state, however, would prove a more ambivalent terrain. Though Irish sovereignty/self-governance was won (to a relative extent), many of the aspirations of the labour movement remained unmet, as conservative forces within both Church and State moved swiftly to marginalise radical currents and contain working-class activism within narrowly defined parameters.

Still, the inter-war period marked the consolidation of labour as a moral and political force within Co. Cork. Its leaders were no longer confined to workshops or picket lines. They occupied city council seats, corresponded with national political actors, and took active roles in shaping public discourse. These achievements were not without cost, and the transition from outsider to stakeholder brought new tensions. But what remained constant was the idea that workers had a right not just to fair pay, but to participate in defining the society they laboured to build.

The cultural dimension of the movement, often overlooked in traditional histories, deserves particular attention. Union halls doubled as libraries and music venues; trade meetings were followed by public lectures and readings; labour processions carried not only banners but messages of education, enlightenment, and ethical vision. These efforts reveal an understanding of politics not simply as struggle for material improvement, but as a process of communal self-actualisation. Workers in Cork city and county sought to create not just better jobs, but fuller lives.

Religion, too, played an ambivalent role throughout this history. The ever-influential Catholic Church in County Cork alternated at times between suspicion and endorsement of trade union activity. At times, clerical authorities condemned strikes as immoral disruptions of social order; at others, they extolled the virtues of solidarity, fairness, as well as temperance. Many workers themselves were actually devout Catholics, who sometimes struggled to reconcile the teachings of their faith with the exigencies of industrial activism. This tension sometimes led to rupture. Rather, it encouraged a kind of moral pluralism within the movement, where Christian ethics and socialistic, or social justice related, pursuits coexisted in sometimes uneasy but usually productive dialogue.

By 1926, the Co. Cork regional labour movement had matured into a formidable institutional presence. It retained its radical roots, even as it engaged with the pragmatics of municipal governance and national policy debates. Its champions had ranged from Liberal reformers to socialist

agitators, from the English parliamentarians to Irish revolutionaries. What united these diverse alliances was not ideological purity, but a shared conviction that the working class deserved more than subsistence—that it deserved agency, respect, and a voice in the shaping of Ireland's future.

In retracing this century-long journey, we uncover not a single narrative, but a group of often inter-woven struggles, contradictions, and aspirations. The Cork Workers' Council, and the broader labour milieu from which it emerged, was never simply reactive. It was prefigurative. It envisioned an Ireland where power would not merely change hands, but be redefined and redistributed. That vision remains unfinished. The structures of injustice that animated the earliest trade protests—inequality, exploitation, exclusion—have not disappeared. They have adapted to new contexts, assumed new guises. Yet the memory of Co. Cork's early labour movement persists, not as nostalgia, but as a source of instruction and inspiration.

To reflect on this history is not to simply honour and attempt to become aware of the past, but also to inherit a responsibility. The struggle for workers' rights, for economic democracy, and for social dignity is as urgent today as it was in the foundries of the 1830s, or the textile mills of the 1920s. The lesson of Co. Cork is not that justice (to varying extents) was achieved, but that it was continually pursued, with imagination, courage, and solidarity. The rising voices of Cork's workers, once silenced or misunderstood, may now resonate through time. They challenge us to listen not only with reverence, but with resolve. Their legacy is not merely what they won, but how they fought—together, persistently, and with the unwavering belief that a better world was not only necessary, but possible.

The renowned Constance Georgina de Markievicz remarked in a parliamentary debate that she interpreted the revolutionary Republic as a "workers' republic, a co-operative commonwealth" as proposed by James Connolly, and believed Home Rule served "capitalistic interests." She clarified that her goal of a Republic reached far beyond constitutional reform or national symbolism, rather, it was about economic justice, popular democracy, and a break from both supposed imperial and capitalist domination, then perceived as intertwined.

POEM - '*THE CHANGE WE SOUGHT*'

BY TADGH QUILL -MANLEY -
AS PUBLISHED IN '*DYNAMIC ZERO*,' USA, ON 11 JANUARY 2025

Every revolution ever
Devised by the most clever
From the rot, they sever
And souls naive
Of anew, believe
Assuming it not too far gone
To rectify all that's wrong

They must be ready to stand up, then
For combat in the villain's den
And although it is not as mighty
The sword decides who holds the pen

Yet history provides a warning
And the idealist may end up mourning
For those without a Machiavellian trait
Are warriors destined for a tragic fate
As it seems that thoroughly good men
Will never be esteemed as great

Those who gain control may revise the theme
Drifting ever further from the dream
Men of puerile mind
To knives are blind
And that vision once so fabled
Destroyed by some, we many enabled

On reflection, it makes the morose sigh
When they hear that brave man's cry
"We serve neither King nor Kaiser"
Acting as a battle galvaniser
Due to the fact that 'ad finem'
There's superficial change achieved since then
And all of us are none the wiser

POEM - '*D.D SHEEHAN B.L.*'

BY TADGH QUILL -MANLEY (2024)

Raised in North Cork
A man who received widespread adulation
It's D.D Sheehan, B.L
Of the Irish Land & Labour Association

A poet and wordsmith
Who build the branch network from scratch
To protect those tenants burnt out
From cottages of thatch

Charles Tanner's death
Left a hole in Mid-Cork
Then up stepped D.D.
Which gave political breadth

One great achievement
Was the Act of 1911
Model homes around Blarney
Brought workers closer to heaven

For Home Rule, he tried
To give the poor Irish their governance
Despite a role in the Great War
He found that the Crown had defied

Off to South England he went
To re-assess his fate
A forerunner to Attlee he served
Worthwhile to emigrate?

RISING VOICES: ORGANISING
CORK'S WORKERS, 1820-1926
TADGH QUILL-MANLEY

RISING VOICES